

A Biblical Sketch: Free Grace Theology

**Understanding the Basics
of Free Grace Theology**

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Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 A Free Gift	8
Chapter 2 The Gospel	17
Chapter 3 Birth, Adoption, & Marriage	25
Chapter 4 Eternal Security	34
Chapter 5 Rewards	48
Chapter 6 Discipline	60
Chapter 7 Discipleship	73
Chapter 8 The Character of God	84
Chapter 9 Admonitions & Possibilities	100
Chapter 10 Practical Living	108
Conclusion	116
Scripture Index	120

Introduction

The Part Many People Skip

If you are like me, then most of the time you simply skip the preface and the introduction of a book, jumping right into the meat of the writing. You probably also skip the opening credits of the movies, ignoring the extra features, and simply want to watch what you paid for. If this is you, and you are like me, why are you still reading? Head over to Chapter 1!

This section is simply for those of you who desire to know the background of the book, the thesis, purpose of writing, and what makes the author think he or she is even qualified to speak on the topic. In answering those questions, let me begin with the latter by first explaining my testimony.

I had a wonderful childhood growing up. I had hard-working parents that loved me and an older brother who taught me. Seemingly we were the typical military family. Growing up in Maryland during the 1980's, we would regularly visit my grandparents, who lived four hours away in Pennsylvania. While there, we would attend their Lutheran church in Richlandtown, Pennsylvania. I do not recall much about attending that church, but what I do vaguely remember is around 12 or so, I attended a Catechism class. Never really thinking much of it, to me it was simply another children's

church atmosphere. Outside of this church in Pennsylvania, we were Chreasters, a term I became familiar with as I preached a sermon titled “The Chreaster Pandemic.” Simply put, a Chreaster is a person who only attends church on Christmas and Easter, hence the term. Again, I had great parents who loved me and taught me wonderful values and morals, and those which were rooted in Scripture. However, church simply was not a priority in my life growing up, and I grew up the life of a Chreaster.

Fast forward to September 2000, I entered basic training, or boot camp (a term most people are familiar with), for the United States Air Force. I joined due to it being a family heritage and I felt, as a Weierbach, I needed to serve my country the same way my brother, father, and many other men in my family served before me. Those of you who have served in our nation’s military may recall that on Sunday during boot camp, trainees were allowed to get away from the boot camp atmosphere and attend church service. I have heard it said there are no atheists in foxholes, but it also seemed that there are no atheists in boot camp either. Everyone took the liberty to get away, even if but for an hour, from the emotional, physical, and psychological demands of military training.

One Sunday, after the sermon, the Protestant chaplain had invited people to go down to the aisle for the invitation. I was not familiar with this portion of church service, but for some reason I chose to go down the aisle with a buddy of mine. I did not know what I was doing, nor why I was doing it. Maybe it was one of those “when in Rome” ordeals. Needless to say, I thought I was saved at that moment, but through the years following, I still didn’t realize what I did that morning, nor

why I did it. There was no thought of Jesus, the cross, resurrection, or anything. I simply walked down to the front during the invitation. If anything, it was simply an emotional response by an Airman, who was far from home. And emotional responses do not grant eternal life.

Skip ahead to 2009, there was a revival service at the church my wife and I began attending in Alabama. The evangelist was preaching a message out of Philippians 3, explaining how no amount of good works or status would allow anyone into heaven. If the apostle Paul considered all his good works as mere “dung” (Philippians 3:8), what chance would I have to go to heaven I thought. I was definitely no apostle Paul! It was then, that evening during the service in which I recalled weeping, realizing I was separated from a God who loves me and sent His Son to take my place upon the cross. Neither my Catechism class, nor walking during the invitation, gave me eternal life. I was convicted and understood that I needed to place my faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross, to be placed in the family of God. And that blessed day, I placed my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I was born again. I remember exactly where I sat, and exactly where I went to the altar. A friend of mine even gave me a CD of the sermon which the Lord used to draw me to eternal life! How cool is that!

Never was I much into reading, or researching anything for that matter, but shortly after being born again, something was lit inside of me. I seemed to have a voracious desire to read the Bible, to try and understand what it means, and I asked plenty of questions. I just had to know more and had to have my many questions answered. My pastor, Ken Stodola, probably grew tired of my many questions, but with his

guidance and discipleship, he gave me the ability to find the answers I sought through studying particular passages. Many times, when I asked him a question, he would simply ask me what I thought, and redirected it back upon me. It frustrated me at the time, but looking back, I knew what he was doing. Trying to turn me into a Berean (Acts 17:11).

During this time, I inevitably came across the views of Calvinism as well as Lordship Salvation. And in having theological discussions with a friend of mine, I knew I had to figure out what I truly believed regarding soteriology. There were many things within the Calvinist and Lordship Salvation positions that did not sit right with me. It seemed to attack the character of God and made Him out to be an immoral deity. Is this the true character of God? Then, while stationed in South Dakota, after speaking with a couple different pastors, I realized many times people who hold theological views because, as I was told, “it is the orthodox view.” But that bothered me. Does orthodoxy determine accuracy? Does not orthodoxy change? If we were to look back in the annals of church history, would believe baptism was a necessary prerequisite for salvation, and that Christianity was governed by papal authority. However, we would be hard-pressed to find in Scripture where an individual is saved because of being baptized, or that Christianity is to be governed by one man, considered the vicar of Christ. Other examples can be given regarding the changing of orthodoxy, but suffice it to say, orthodoxy changes with time and culture.

Orthodoxy simply reveals what is conventional or normal within a religious group, at a particular time in history. Take the Shia and Sunni Muslims. The Shia and Sunni Muslims

both follow the Islamic faith however, their theological views of the Quran are different, from eschatology, spiritual leadership within the religion, and traditions regarding their prophet Muhammad. The Shia has orthodoxy, as well as the Sunni's. Again, orthodoxy cannot dictate accuracy, orthodoxy only reveals what is the conventional understanding of the time and culture. Through discussion with many people, listening to sermons and teachings online, and reading commentaries on various passages, I came to the conclusion that many people simply follow a so-called orthodox understanding of soteriology, at least the orthodoxy, mainly attributed to the Reformation Period.

In my desire to study soteriology, I had gone through a long, arduous journey in studying key passages such as the Pharaoh in Egypt and the clay & the potter (Romans 9), the election of God (Ephesians 1), Jesus's mention that fruits will reveal one's standing (Matthew 7), Parable of the Soils (Matthew 13), bearing fruit (John 15), and many more. Through prayer, discipleship, and perseverance, I came to the conclusion that what is known as Calvinism, and the similar teaching of Lordship Salvation, was not a biblical teaching. Anything which placed an emphasis on doing something to receive or maintain salvation was works-based, and definitely not "free." My previous book, *Investigating Lordship Salvation*, highlights some basic understandings of the fallacies I uncovered when studying the Lordship Salvation position, as well as expounds some of the previously mentioned verses above.

Since the day I received eternal life, I have spent the last decade-plus, reading, studying, and researching Scripture. God had used my desire for truth-seeking, to begin an

apologetics ministry called Contending 4 Christ Apologetics; or C4C for short. C4C seeks to refute false teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as teach the freeness of eternal life found in Jesus Christ, among other topics.

So, what makes me qualified to speak on this subject? It is not my degrees. It is not my so-called knowledge or understanding of Scripture. Trust me, I am still trying to learn as I have been corrected many times. I personally believe it is God who makes me qualified for this work. This book, along with the aforementioned writings, is an endeavor that God had laid on my heart. I am nobody without Jesus Christ, and simply seek to be used of Him to expound upon what I truly believe is the biblical teaching of Free Grace Theology.

In the following chapters, I will provide simply a "sketch" of this theology. A sketch is a rough drawing that simply provides a general picture of someone or something. A sketch is not in-depth, colored-in, nor finalized in its entirety, but merely seeks to give a basic understanding from the artist or drafters perspective. As such, that is what this book is about, sketching Free Grace Theology. You can find many books dedicated to go in-depth regarding the topics of the various chapters of this book, but this will simply provide the basic understanding, framework, of what Free Grace Theology teaches regarding eternal life, discipleship, rewards, discipline, security, and much more! Note, while terms must be used in their context because they carry various meanings, unless specified otherwise, my use of the term "salvation" in this book refers to being justified and receiving eternal life.

It is my prayer that this book helps corrects misconceptions that are made regarding Free Grace Theology, encourages the Christian with the eternal security found in the promise of Jesus Christ, as well as adding another tool in the apologist's toolkit for defending the faith and defending the great salvation that Jesus Christ freely offers to whosoever.

Chapter 1

A Free Gift

Does “Free” Really Mean Free?

*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one **the free gift** came upon all men unto justification of life.
(Romans 5:18)*

The entire foundation of Free Grace Theology rises and falls upon the definition of the word, “free.” Unfortunately, however, to many people, free does not mean free, but rather means “with strings attached.” It is the fine print on the bottom of the form that explains the legal obligations you have to meet in order to receive, or maintain, the item or policy you are signing up for. You know exactly what I mean, for we have all seen and read fine print. Unfortunately, this is what many preachers and teachers do when explaining the Gospel. The message of Jesus Christ’s payment for our sins upon the cross is clear, however they then attach requirements in the fine print of the details on either receiving or keeping this eternal life. In the fine print, they reference repenting, or as they would explain, changing your mind on sins or to stop sinning, as a prerequisite to be saved. Or they may annotate in the fine print that you will only know if you are a “genuine” Christian if you have repented of all your sins. Then there are

those that, again, can make the Gospel seem clear, but then undergird it with the fine print of having to persevere to the end in order to receive “final salvation,” as if the initial salvation, or temporal salvation God offers was not enough.

This reveals that there has been a growing departure from the definition of the word “free,” whether the Church knows it or not. Whenever an attachment or condition is placed upon something that is labeled as free, it by definition is not free. How many of us have received a “free vacation” by sitting through an eight-hour session on why we should purchase a condominium? Was that vacation actually free? Of course not. It cost us time that we will never get back. It cost some emotional real estate too, because from what I hear, those presentations can actually get pretty intense as the presenter tries to strong-arm people to purchase property. Or how many of us have received a free dog or cat that someone was trying to find a home for? Yes, it may be true that the pet may have been free, but there is still a cost associated with pet ownership. The vet fees for annual exams, the cost of dog or cat food, toys to entertain the pets, the list goes on and on. Sure, the pet itself may have been free, but in order to keep the pet, you must spend money on it else the pet may be taken away by animal control, or worse, the pet may die of malnutrition or disease.

Defining “Free”

While words do evolve in the course of the English vernacular history, such as a unicorn and replenish, the word free has not changed. Intrinsic in it is the understanding that free simply means free. For instance, in a dictionary in 1828, the primary

definition for a unicorn was a one-horned animal, possibly a monoceros or rhinoceros.¹ In the same dictionary, the primary definition for replenish was “to fill or to stock.”² However, if you were to look up the words unicorn and replenish in a modern dictionary today, you would come across the primary definitions that a unicorn is a mythical creature³ and to fill again.⁴ The words unicorn and replenish have evolved due to how they are being used in the English language. However, what is interesting is that, in the 1828 dictionary, the definition for the word free was “not being under necessity or restraint, or without expense.” In the same modern dictionary of the words unicorn and replenish, free is defined as “costing nothing.” While many words evolve their meanings, the word free has remained the same for over 190 years.

So why then do many preachers and teachers redefine the word free? In my humble opinion, I believe that it is due to various reasons. First is the misunderstanding of the freeness of eternal life. To some, being saved is not allowable to people who still commit sins. Another reason is that some people have the preconceived notion that there must be a change to prove one’s new life. Some preachers and teachers teach that there must be a visible change in one’s life to have eternal life, while others teach that one must persevere in believing or obedience to have final salvation. Some teach this unknowingly, some ignorantly, and some arrogantly. Even

¹ 1828 Websters Dictionary, accessed June 10th 2022,
<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/unicorn>

² 1828 Websters Dictionary, accessed June 10th 2022,
<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/replenish>

³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed June 10th 2022,
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/unicorn>

⁴ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed June 10th 2022,
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/replenish>

though there are many passages in the Bible that clearly state the freeness of eternal life, its understanding is also seen in concepts that are taught throughout, that eternal life is given with no strings attached, e.g. freely.

This begs a good question, “if the freeness of salvation is so frequently mentioned or taught in the Bible, and there are no strings attached, then why is the fine-print teaching so prevalent in today’s pulpits?” Again, it is my opinion, that many Christians put more faith in the theologian than they do in the Bible. What do I mean? I mean, if someone is paid to study the Bible and teach it, why do I need to study it myself, right? Or sometimes a Christian believes that since the Bible is so in-depth and exhaustive that they do not have the ability to know how to properly interpret many passages they read. Therefore, they simply trust their favorite Bible teacher. After all, how many people have heard the term “hermeneutics” or “exegesis,” let alone have taken a course on it? However, a basic course and understanding on interpretive principles of Scripture will reveal that you actually “hermeneutic” very frequently throughout your week!

Understanding What “Free” Means

No other passage in Scripture illustrates the concept of something being free than Romans 4:4-5:

⁴ Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

In this passage, Paul had finished up explaining how Abraham was considered righteous in the eyes of God. God reveals that he merely believed in God's promise (Genesis 15:6), and due to his faith in the word of God and the promise of the Messiah, he was justified (a theological term meaning to have eternal life). The very next two verses illustrate the freeness of Abraham's salvation. Paul reveals that if someone does a work for something, then due to their work, what they receive is not grace but rather debt. In other words, if Abraham had to "do" something, then he would not receive the grace necessary for salvation. We know that it is by grace that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8), and in order to receive grace, it must be offered and received freely. That is clearly what Romans 4:4-5 is explaining; that grace was freely offered to Abraham, who had done no works do receive it, because then it would no longer be grace but debt. The only requirement was that Abraham had to place his faith in God's promise.

I would like to illustrate the freeness of salvation in a modern story.

There was a man who was blessed to be able to buy a 2005 Corvette, 3LT Base model. We will call him the car owner. For those of you who know anything about the C6 Corvette understand that the 2005 is the first year of the C6 generation. To many, this year is the metaphorical red, headed stepchild of the Corvette sixth generation. And for it to be a base model, makes it even more unsatisfying to many. But to this owner, it was fulfilling a dream to own a Corvette. This Corvette was over 15 years old, and as such, had a 15+ year old paint job. While it was not horrible, it had many blemishes. The owner had attempted to fill in some of the chips with Bondo and

attempted to wet-sand & paint with touchup paint, but no matter how much he tried, he couldn't get the car paint job to look better. In fact, he made it look worse as the blemishes were now more noticeable because he had removed too much of the clear coat and did not even understand how to use the touch-up paint pen.

The owner knew another man, and this second man had offered to put a ceramic coat on the car, in an attempt to bring life back to the old paint job, for free! We will call this second man, the detailer. To this, the owner agreed. So, the detailer took the Corvette to his house, and a couple weeks later, he had delivered the car back to its owner. As the owner got his car back, he quickly realized how much better the Corvette looked! Using the backside of his hand, the car felt as smooth as glass! The car was very lustrous, and the color simply popped! The 2005 Corvette seemed to be a brand-new car! And come to find out, the man who ceramic-coated the car, the detailer, said he wanted to do it for free. Wow! This type of detailing usually goes for over \$2,000, and yet he charged the owner nothing! What a deal! The paint job on the car was once dead, but now was back to life.

If you haven't figured it out by now, the owner was me. I am anything but a knowledgeable mechanic, let alone a car painter! The car detailer was my pastor, Ken Stodola, who took the car and ceramic coated it for free. I had placed my faith in my pastor, believing he could fix the blemishes in the car. And my pastor had to pay a price for detailing it because it was physically exhausting. It cost me belief, and it cost him pain.

Notice what the detailer did not say in this story. He did not say “you must keep this car clean daily,” “you must never have mechanical issues with the car,” or “you must persevere in believing this car has a new ceramic coat on the paint job.” The detailers promise of the freeness of the ceramic coat was rooted in the character of the detailer. And the car owner had to place his faith in the promise of the detailer that the detailer could do what he said he could, and that it was free.

This is a simple illustration of the Gospel. We are all the car owner, and God is the detailer. He offers to make our life brand new, to clean us up and make us new again, but this is only available if we place faith in His promise. It requires faith on our part, and it cost pain on His, for He sent His Son to take our place upon the cross, in order to metaphorically ceramic coat our lives.

Concluding Thoughts

This is the concept of free that Free Grace Theology teaches. The car owner placed trust in the detailer to fix his car. The car detailer had offered to do it for free. And when the car was finished and cleaned up, the detailer remained true to his promise of a free ceramic coat. But because the car owner felt so appreciative of the detailer’s job, he gave him a gift card for an auto parts store. A basic understanding of Free Grace Theology is that eternal life, what many consider “salvation,” (and used interchangeably in this book with eternal life) requires a simple, volitional choice to believe in the promise of God for eternal life. There is no fine print, no strings attached, and no conditions to meet or fulfill to obtain it.

The following verses very simplistically express how eternal life is given freely, without strings attached: Genesis 15:6; John 1:12-13, 3:14-16, 5:24, 6:40, 11:25-27; Romans 3:24-25, 5:1; Galatians 3:2; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Timothy 1:16; Titus 3:5-8. This list is not exhaustive, and many of these passages will be dealt with in later chapters.

Therefore, since properly understanding the word “free,” and illustrating the concept, let us now consider how one can receive eternal life by considering the Gospel message.

Chapter 1:

Key Take-Aways

- The definition of “free” has not changed in over 190 years; free always means without strings attached.
- Anything that must be done to receive or maintain something negates its “freeness.”
- Though noble, the emotionalism necessitating a Christian to maintain good works to have or maintain salvation is foreign to Scripture.
- If the obtaining or maintaining of one’s salvation was predicated upon their obedience, no one would be saved.
- The “freeness” of salvation is expressed in many passages, to include Genesis 15:6; John 1:12-13, 3:14-16, 5:24, 6:40, 11:25-27; Romans 3:24-25, 5:1; Galatians 3:2; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Timothy 1:16; Titus 3:5-8.

Chapter 2

The Gospel

The Depth & Amazement of John 3:16

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that **whosoever believeth** in him should not perish, but have
everlasting life.
(John 3:16)*

No other passage in Scripture makes the Gospel message clearer than John 3:16. If this is truly the case, then why is it often overlooked when explaining the Gospel? Possibly because most people have relegated John 3:16 to simply a children's verse, that is seemingly fine to teach the children, but somehow us intellectual adults have to explain away its simplistic message. But this verse is so much more than a simplistic children's memory verse. It is the Gospel encapsulated. Let us consider this verse:

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

This verse is very simple and yet so very profound, at the same time. It is simplistic in that it is able to be remembered and understood by children, and yet so profound that its depth is confounding to those which meditate on the verse. And yes, I do mean confounding, as you will see. But before we break down this verse, realize the Bible uses many different literary devices. Literary devices are aspects of writing that conveys ideas, illustrates truths, or emphasizes concepts. A common literary device is the simile, where something is considered similar to another. Another common literary device is the hyperbole, where one makes an exaggeration in order to draw emphasis. The book of Proverbs is replete with anthropomorphism, where human features are given to non-human entities, such as wisdom and understanding. Now what we find in John 3:16 is the literary device of cause-and-effect. The cause-and-effect device seeks to explain a relationship between two events or actions. Many literary devices are so common in our English language that often times we overlook them in reading. So let us examine this device in the most simplistic Gospel message in Scripture, beginning with the first cause-and-effect.

Cause & Effect #1

Cause: For God so loved the world

Effect: that He gave His only begotten Son

We are told in the beginning of this verse that God loves the world so much, He gave His only begotten Son. Think about that for a moment. God, Elohim, the Creator of the cosmos, the LORD of Hosts, Immanuel. The One to whom our very existence is indebted to, loves you and I so much that

He gave His only begotten Son. What would you sacrifice for the cause of love? Would you sacrifice your time, by investing a portion of your day to simply talk to Him through prayer? Would you sacrifice your money to further God's kingdom through missions, at home or abroad? Would you sacrifice your job, and go if He calls you to go elsewhere? Sadly, at least here in America, people will not even give up time, money, or position, let alone make a sacrifice. It is commonly said here in the West, "show me your bank statement and I'll show you where your heart is." But that's not entirely accurate, maybe to some degree it is. What about one's time? Time spent actively in reading the Bible, prayer, or worship to God. Time spent inactively, meditating on God's word. One can invest millions of dollars into God's kingdom, but if that financial giving is rooted selfish ambition, or any reason other than pure motivation for God, than that giving is ignored by God. Giving, just like every other aspect of service to God, must be rooted in faith and pure, godly motivation. What does your checkbook look like? What does your schedule look like? Can we invest in God's kingdom through our time and our checkbook?

Realize that God giving His only begotten Son was not predicated on what the world did or does. God did not see us and think to Himself, "they have done so much for me, I need to return the favor." No. God simply loves you and I, and the entire world, that He volitionally chose to give His only begotten Son. This is what confounds me. Why would God do such a thing? On my best day, I am still not as holy as I can be. I am still not as joyous as I could be. I am still not as dedicated as I could be. In spite of all my failures, and in spite of all your failures, God loves us so much, He chose to do this. Why?

Because God is love (1 John 4:8). Love is intrinsic of God. It is one of His many character traits that He holds perfectly.

The first cause-and-effect of John 3:16 is that because God loves the world (cause), He sent His only begotten Son (effect). We understand this cause, but how profound is the effect? I believe a song helps us understand the effect. There is a song called “How Many Kings” by a group called Downhere. The entire song is about the profound understanding that the God who created every single atom in this world, and everything in the unseen world, for but a moment in history, stepped down from His throne to pay for the sins that every single person in the world committed. Because God is perfect, holy, and no unrighteousness can dwell in His presence, there had to be a sacrifice made to cleanse this sin-stained soul of ours. And the plan God has chosen was to send Jesus Christ to perfectly obey the Mosaic Law, fulfilling every single command, submit to the Roman authority to the point of death, in order to be the propitiation of the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). Jesus Christ, over 2,000 years ago, bore three nails and a crown of thorns, to not only cover your sins and mine, but to completely remove them from our soul if we place faith in Him. The death of Jesus was only because God’s love for you and me. That is both beautiful and confounding at the same time.

This first cause-and-effect relationship reveals God’s action based upon His love. The second cause-and-effect relationship reveals our requirement in order to receive eternal life.

Cause & Effect #2

Cause: that whosoever believeth in Him

Effect: should not perish, but have everlasting life

First, realize again what is not said. Jesus does not say we must forsake every single sin we are committing at that moment. Which of us knew every sin we were doing prior to coming to Christ? Also, Jesus did not say that we have to make Him Lord of our life. While the intentions may be noble by those that teach Jesus needing to be one's Lord in order to be saved, it conflates salvation with discipleship. Again, which of us, after getting saved, has made Jesus Christ the Lord of our life in every area, every day? If you think you have or do, then you just lied, because not a soul on earth has Jesus as Lord of their life every day. The Lordship of Jesus in the life of a Christian is built around growing in Christ through discipleship and fellowship. That is the crux of John 15:1-11, a Christian's ability to produce fruit depends on their abiding in the Vine, i.e. maintaining a close relationship with Jesus Christ. Which happens through accountability and discipleship.

Jesus has no strings attached to the Gospel message; He simply says whosoever believeth in Him. Whosoever means exactly that, whosoever. It does not mean the "elect," "chosen," or those "predestined." Whosoever means anyone. Sometimes much thinking makes one mad. And sometimes many degrees make one uneducated. We overthink simplistic messages because we think, "it can't be that easy." And we complicate the uncomplicated. Jesus could not have said it any clearer as to who He was referring. What does it mean to

believe in Him? Jesus just referenced the brazen serpent in the wilderness during the days of Moses (John 3:14). A quick reading of that historical event (Numbers 21:5-9) reveals that the Israelites were being judged by God because they, yet again, were complaining about leaving Egypt and believing that God just brought them out to die in the wilderness. They believed Egyptian life was better than the life God was bringing them through. Because of this, God sent fiery serpents which bit the Israelites and they were going to die from the venom. However, God made a way for them to survive, and live. Moses was commanded to make a fiery serpent on a pole and anyone who was bit, if they looked upon the serpent, they would be healed, and live. This took faith on the part of the one who was bitten, to believe God's promise that they would live if they simply looked upon the pole. We are told everyone who looked, did in fact survive. Jesus revealed, just as Moses lifted that serpent pole and those who looked upon it in faith, lived, He too would be lifted up, and that whosoever believes upon Him, would live. It is safe to deduce since the Israelites looked upon the pole in the wilderness, believing they would receive life, so too do you and I need to look upon Jesus Christ's crucifixion and realize that believing in His payment would give us life.

This is the effect of the cause, that not only would we have everlasting life, but also we should not perish. A few things to note here. First, it is simple belief in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that pays for your sins, that gives you eternal life. No strings, no fine print, no required commitment. Simply faith. Second, it is important to see this everlasting life is a present tense reality. When someone gets saved, they are not waiting to receive everlasting life,

they presently possess it. Though we all die physically, the Christian will never die spiritually; the second death that John details (Revelation 21:8). Finally, how long is everlasting life? It may seem silly to ask, but we must consider it. Everlasting life is...everlasting. So, if one receives everlasting life the moment they believe in Jesus Christ's payment for their sins on the cross, then that everlasting life can never be lost because it is everlasting, seen by the fact it is a present tense reality. And we are then clothed with immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53-54), or as one calls it "deathlessness."⁵

Concluding Thoughts

Yes, John 3:16 is a very simplistic verse, but yet it is one of the most profound verses in all the Scripture. The God who created the cosmos, and the One to whom our very existence is dependent upon, chose to die a martyr's death to pay the penalty you and I deserved to pay, simply because He loves you and I. That is profound and confounding at the same time. And yet I would have it no other way. Great is God's love for us.

But the question that must follow is, do you believe that? If you have never considered this, then I pray you take a moment and let this chapter saturate your soul. Trust not in your works, your philosophy, or your wisdom, but trust in the promise of God that says you can have eternal life by simply believing Jesus Christ died for your sins and paid your payment. No fine print, and no strings attached.

⁵ Jonathan Wheatley, *Unique Words of the King James Bible* (Meadville, PA: Christian Faith Publishing Inc. 2020), 136.

Chapter 2:

Key Take-Aways

- The depth of John 3:16 is often overlooked and is frequently relegated to a mere children's memory verse.
- God emphasizes His love for the world, and the free gift of salvation by simple faith by the cause-and-effect literary device.
- The first cause and effect is that God loves the world so much (cause) that He sent Jesus Christ to die for us (effect).
- The second cause and effect is that whosoever believes on the finished work of Christ for their sins (cause) will receive everlasting life (effect).
- Everlasting life, often referred to as eternal, is just that, everlasting/eternal, and cannot be lost.
- One should make Jesus the Lord of their life, but that is a requisite of discipleship not evangelism.

Chapter 3

Birth, Adoption, & Marriage

The Power, Process, & Promise of God

*But as many as received him, to them gave he power
to become the sons of God, even to them that
believe on his name:
(John 1:12)*

In America, there are three ways to enter into a parental/child relationship with another person: by birth, by marriage, or by adoption. Scripture details each aspect of these in a way I call the power, process, and promise of God. It is the power of God to be born, the process of God to work it through adoption, and the promise of God through the marriage covenant. Let me explain.

To begin with, one becomes another's child through the process of birth. Without taking time to explain the birds-and-the-bees, we understand that a child born into a family is considered biologically related to their parents. Whether a son or daughter, this child takes on certain traits, or characteristics of both, mother and father. It was not long into my childhood before I realized I had inherited the genetic makeup of a good, strong cleft-chin. Not only was I blessed with a cleft, chin, but

I had also obtained a great sense of humor. It was through my father that I realized dad jokes were a thing before they became popular. Jokes such as when I would say, “Dad, I’m hungry,” he would reply “Hello hungry! I’m dad.” I am sure you heard similar jokes in your lifetime as well, before it became coined as a dad joke. What is interesting about becoming a child through birth is the development of traits from both parents in the child. Through the process of birth, the child becomes a combined makeup of their father and mother.

Spiritual Birth: The Power of God

In the Bible, this process is known as being born-again. Before Jesus gave his famous John 3:16 statement to Nicodemus, he explained to Nicodemus how he must be born again. To Nicodemus this made no sense. After all, if a man is alive, how can he be born again? Therefore, Nicodemus inquisitively asked Jesus, “can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?” (John 3:4). But Jesus spoke not of being born again physically, but rather being born spiritually. To make alive something that was naturally lifeless, our eternal soul.

Peter reveals that the ability to be born again, comes not through a corruptible seed but rather an incorruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23a). Used only one-time in the Bible, the Greek word for this seed is *spora* (σπορά),⁶ and it means a seed that is sown in a field. What seed is Peter talking about? Many times,

⁶ Blue Letter Bible, accessed May 1st 2022,
https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/lpe/1/23/t_conc_1152023.

Scripture answers our questions, should we just continue reading. In this case, Peter states this seed is “the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23b). Through the Gospel message, i.e., the word of God, a seed is planted in the soul of the individual, and it springs up life if the person believes that Gospel (Matthew 13:8-23). It is at that point, the person is born again, by the incorruptible seed of God, and born of Spirit (John 3:5). No doubt, being born of the Spirit is only possible through the power of God, for bringing spiritually alive something that was once dead is a work no man can do.

Spiritual Adoption: The Process of God

So, an individual becomes a child of God by being born again, with a spiritual birth, the power of God. This spiritual birth is made possible through a process that God calls adoption. Adoption is simply, the process of which one person is legally placed into the care another person’s family, to raise as their own child. While the definition is simple, the process is not. I am privileged to know a couple families who have gone through the extensive, and expensive, process of adoption. There is something very powerful when we consider one’s desire to adopt a child, whether young or old. First, there is a choice. I am a very blessed man to be the father of two great children. However, I did not choose to have my children, though my actions were a form of choice. I had no idea how my children would look, behave, what characteristics they would each have, or anything else. I knew their gender, thanks to ultrasound technology, but that was the extent of my knowledge of them pre-birth. Once they were born, I began realizing their general traits, personality, and truly enjoyed getting to know them more and more each moment. God knew

I needed them, and He must have thought they needed me as a father. That being said, I did not choose them, I was blessed by God to have Him give them to me. Adoption however is a little different.

Adoption is one person, or family, seeing another person in need, typically a child, and making a conscious choice to choose that individual and legally place them into their family. There is no obligation to adopt anyone, or to care for another person who is not in your legal family. As opposed to being born into a family, adoption is seeing the need of a child up for adoption and a burden by the family wanting to adopt. At that point, the family goes through the process of adoption, where it can take anywhere from a couple months to a few years for the process to be finalized. And cost-wise, it can be thousands to tens-of-thousands of dollars. Make no mistake, those seeking to adopt, are making a conscious and costly choice to place this individual into their family.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul reveals that God's plan from the beginning was that people would be able to be placed in the family of God through adoption. Ephesians 1:5 states

⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

You can find many books refuting the erroneous teaching someone is predestined to be a child of God, or in other words, elected unto salvation, so I will not deal with this here. Suffice it to say that Ephesians 1:3-14 is a passage explaining the blessings a Christian receives, not

the election of people unto eternal life. Here in verse 5, God states He has predestined that the process of which someone becomes a child of His is through adoption. Just as we have just seen, there is a long process of adoption, and a cost associated with it.

Galatians explains this process in Galatians 4:4.

⁴ But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

The long process of adoption was finalized at the fulness of time. God had waited for the right time in history for Jesus Christ to come, so as to be born under the Mosaic Law, rejected by His own, and be crucified. This was the cost associated with God's adoption of those who place faith in Him: the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Again, it amazes me how God loves us so much, that He willingly chose to die a death we deserve to die, in order to bring us into His family through faith.

Spiritual Marriage: The Promise of God

The power of God by the spiritual birth is made possible because God's predestined process of adoption for those who would believe. We then see God's covenantal promise in the engagement and marriage of the Church.

God reveals this concept in a couple places of the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 11:2, He writes:

² For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

It is taught throughout Scripture that the Church is the bride of Christ, and that the Church is made up of Christians. Therefore, as a Christian, we are figuratively the bride of Christ. When I first came across this concept early in my Christian life, as a man, I was weirded out. “Me, being a bride?” But the more I know of Christ and the more I know about the contractual basis of marriage, and the Jewishness of Scripture, I realized this was merely a picture of the covenantal process, not a requirement for me to change genders. Realize what is being done here, Paul is taking a physical reality and making a spiritual application. Similar to adoption, marriage is a choice. A choice to cleave unto one another and become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

I was privileged to be asked to officiate my first wedding ceremony early in 2022. As a pastor, I have officiated many funerals, been on an ordination council, had countless counseling sessions with those in need, but this was a first for me, to be able to officiate a wedding. I soon realized that this is one of the most joyous aspects of being a pastor, being able to join two Christians, who are devoted to each other, and being a part of them legally becoming one family. During the ceremony, there is a time for the husband and wife to exchange vows. Typically, they will exchange the traditional vows, making promises to one another, similar to this

*to love and the cherish, have and to hold, for
better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in
sickness and in health, remaining faithful so long
as you both shall live*

In this part of the ceremony, it is as if the bride and the groom are on an island by themselves, with no one else around. If you have ever been married, you know what I am talking about. When Rebecca and I were married, I had the worst (or best, I guess you can say) case of tunnel vision ever known to man. All I saw was a gorgeous woman in a stunning white dress, walking towards me. I was so enraptured, that I even sang a song to her during the ceremony! Those of you who know me know two things. First, I hate singing. Second, I can't sing. I did not care that day, we were on an island by ourselves.

What is important to understand about the bride and groom taking vows is that they are covenanting with each other, and with God, they will remain committed and true to each other, as long as they both live. While it is unfortunate divorces do occur, and some marriages do not even last the honeymoon phase, the breaking of the marriage covenant occurred because one or both parties which covenanted did not keep their promise. This, however, is not the case with God.

When the Bible mentions Christians are the Church, and that the Church is the bride of Christ, this reveals that Jesus Christ has made a marriage covenant with us, through spiritual birth, and the process of adoption. This means as being in the family of God, and betrothed to Christ, this marriage covenant will never be broken, because God cannot lie

(Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). And if eternal life is a gift of God (Romans 6:23b), then God cannot take that gift away (James 1:17).

Concluding Thoughts

Free Grace Theology explains this three-fold blessing of salvation, and its foundation and security based upon the promise of God, not on the work of man. First, eternal life is only possible through the power of God, seen by the spiritual birth, being born again, by faith. Second, the process which God chose for one to be placed into His family is the process of adoption, where He saw a need, had a burden, and made a choice to offer salvation because of His love. And third, the promise of salvation is seen through the marriage covenant made with Christians, in which God cannot break that covenant because He remains faithful. Therefore, Free Grace Theology understands that salvation is wholly of God, from the power, process, and promise He has determined, for whosoever believeth.

Chapter 3:

Key Take-Aways

- It is by God's power (spiritual birth), process (spiritual adoption), and promise (marriage) that one receives eternal life.
- The Gospel message is the incorruptible seed that one must believe in order to be saved.
- God did not predestine people to be saved, rather He predestined that whosoever believed in the Gospel message would be adopted into His family.
- God willingly chose to go through the process of adoption (e.g., the crucifixion) because of His great love for all mankind.
- The betrothal period, and subsequent marriage union, of Christ and the Church is a picture of the eternal security of the believer.
- Through the picture of marriage, God covenanted with the Christian and Himself, a covenant that He will not break.

Chapter 4

Eternal Security

The Character of God, Biblical Syntax, & Agency of the Holy Spirit

*Who hath also **sealed us**, and given the earnest
of the Spirit in our hearts.
(2 Corinthians 1:22)*

The previous chapter revealed how one's eternal life is secured based upon the power, process, and promise of God. However, the security of a Christian is not only found in these three concepts, but also expressly taught in the New Testament. Free Grace Theology holds to the eternal security of the believer, not based upon works that a Christian does, but because of God's word, the Bible. And in the Bible, God uses different pictures, processes, and syntax, along with His character, to make this theological point known.

But before we go further, I must explain what is meant by the term eternal security. In the most simplistic terms, eternal security refers to the fact that a Christian's eternal life is secured from the moment they believe in Jesus Christ as Savior until they are with Him in heaven. That means upon

salvation, there is nothing that a Christian can do to lose or forfeit their eternal standing with God.

Entering a Rabbit-Hole

Join me for a moment as I go down a metaphorical rabbit-hole. In a works-based culture, this seems very difficult for many to understand, as many seek to argue that a Christian must either persevere in good works, or a Christian must maintain faithfulness in their belief of Jesus Christ as their Savior. While they may seem to be noble in effort, they are indeed faulty in understanding. Refer back to Chapter 1 where we considered the definition of free. If the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23b), and that gift is freely given (Romans 3:24), then by definition nothing can be done to receive or maintain the free gift; else it would not be free. But what about those who supposedly walk away from their faith? Do they still have eternal life? In a short answer, yes; for the sole reason that if we place any strings or fine print to the Gospel message, then it is no longer of grace but of works (Chapter 2).

Emerging from this rabbit-hole, let us continue on the path of understanding eternal security. On this path, we will stop off at various checkpoints. And just as checkpoints in a race simply mark where on the race you are, so too will these checkpoints mark the various points of eternal security. But first, we must begin at the starting line. Let us imagine this starting line is the reception of the saving message of the Gospel (Chapter 2). Once someone receives the free gift of God, they begin this race, an

analogy in the Bible referring to the Christian life (Hebrews 12:1). So, we now begin this lifelong race.

The Character of God

We come to the first checkpoint of eternal security, the fact that eternal life is predicated on the character and promise of God, and not upon the work of man. As we saw in the last chapter, salvation is wholly of God through His power, process, and promise. And in the marriage union between the Church (i.e., the Christian) and Jesus Christ, it is a covenantal agreement made by God with Himself. Once in the eternal family of God, He makes many promises regarding the security of the Christian.

John 6:40

⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

In this verse, Jesus Christ promises everyone who believes on Him for eternal life, has exactly that, everlasting, or eternal life. And Jesus promises those who believed on Him, He will bodily resurrect on the last day.

John 10:28

²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Here Jesus promises that those who believe in Him will never perish...*never*. From the moment of your belief, Jesus's promise here applies to you! You will never perish, never be in danger of being eternally separated from the presence of God. Not only will the Christian never perish, but neither can the Christian be removed from the hand of God. God's hand and arm are commonly used in Scripture as reference to the power of God, and this reveals that unless someone is greater in power than God Almighty, the Christian can never be removed from His eternal grip. And I contend that neither you nor I are stronger than He is, so we cannot escape His divine protection. And in that I am forever grateful!

1 John 5:13

¹³ These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Through the apostle John, God wants the Christian to know, without a shadow of a doubt, they have eternal life. The only qualifier is that one believes on Jesus Christ, through the Gospel message. If that has happened, then Scripture boldly declares, know ye have eternal life. How sad it is for a Christian not to know they have eternal life, when God clearly declares it has been given. In a society which continuously tells people how they are not good enough. How they need to do better, be better, look better. And because of this, they believe God is equally as strict and demeaning. Therefore, many people today have anxiety as they are attempting to prove to themselves to God that they are a "genuine" Christian, only to continuously fail to meet their own

expectations of perfection, let alone God's holy standards. This is the very thing Paul rebuked the Galatian church over in Galatians 3:2-3:

² This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

The Galatians foolishly believed that although they were saved by grace through faith, they believed they were kept, or preserved by works of the flesh. To God, this belief is nothing but foolish.

Biblical Syntax

Passing through the first checkpoint, we come to the second, the realization that the eternal security of the Christian is seen in the syntax as well. Consider the following verses (italics mine).

John 3:15

¹⁵ That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but *have eternal life*.

John 3:16

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but *have everlasting life*.

John 3:36

³⁶ He that believeth on the Son *hath everlasting life*: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 5:24

²⁴ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

John 6:40

⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may *have everlasting life*: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:47

⁴⁷ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me *hath everlasting life*.

These verses reveal that eternal, or everlasting life is a present reality, not a future possession. The moment someone believes in the finished work of Jesus for their sins, they live in the present possession of eternal life. The eternal life begins at that moment. And if eternal life begins at that moment, and if it could be lost, then it would never have been eternal, but rather temporal or probationary. Yet Scripture never records a probationary life, or a temporal life; only an eternal or everlasting life.

The Agency of the Holy Spirit

The third, and final checkpoint, is one of the agency of the Holy Spirit. While much has been written regarding the agency of the Spirit in gifts, the illumination of Scripture, and the enablement to live a victorious Christian life, not much has been written regarding His preserving work in the life of the Christian. This third checkpoint undergirds eternal security by realizing the sealing of the Holy Spirit leads to eternal security.

First, what is a seal? Today we seal envelopes with adhesive, licking, or getting the envelope flap wet, then pressing it onto the backside of the envelope. However, that envelope is not truly secure, for any pot of boiling water can undo the seal. Put it another way, in the military, when people would depart for another base, we would tape the envelope shut, then place a black marker line on the flap, knowing if the tape was broken, the black marker would be offset, easily identifiable. This is a similar image to that of the sealing in the Roman day of which Paul was writing. A king or designated official would have a signet, or a ring with an impression, and with candle wax, would pour on the letter, make an impression with the signet. In doing so, the symbol of the ring would make the impression on the wax, which would solidify and harden. This would then carry with it the authority of the king, and the only one who would be able to break the seal is the intended recipient or the king himself. One would know that the letter was tampered with if the seal was broken. And in many cases the penalty for opening the king's seal is death.

With this in mind, Jesus makes the promise of a Christian being sealed in John 14:16-17.

¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; ¹⁷ [Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

In this verse, we learn the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter. In the English, we think of a comforter as a large blanket that comforts us, bringing reassurance and peace, similar to Linus in the Peanuts comic strip. And that definitely is one aspect of the Spirit here. But in the Greek, it has the idea as an advocate, one who pleads another's case. We see this aspect in 1 John 2:1.

¹ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"

Here Jesus Christ is called the Paraclete, advocate, comforter just as the Spirit. Whereas Jesus, in 1 John, advocates that His blood covered our guilt and shame, the Spirit's role of advocacy is for the Christian's sealing by God.

The second agency of the Spirit is that He will be indwelling the Christian. The purpose of this indwelling is to be able to have a lifeline to God, to be able to be persuaded to do things of God with more sensitivity, and to be able to fight against

the works and desires of the flesh. This guaranteed sealing is found in Ephesians 4:30.

³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

As well as 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

²¹ Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; ²² Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

So, the Spirit indwells a Christian, and we read the moment the Spirit indwells a believer is at conversion, based upon Ephesians 1:13.

¹³ In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Therefore, the path to receiving eternal life is found in 1) hearing the Gospel, 2) believing the Gospel, 3) being sealed with the Holy Spirit.

The only way to lose this eternal life, break this seal, is if the sealer or the recipient breaks it, and the Christian can do neither.

Understanding what is sealed, who is sealed, and by whom one is sealed, we must now attempt to realize the purpose

of the Holy Spirit's sealing. This sealing is called numerous things. First, it is the "earnest of the Spirit" as seen in 2 Corinthians 1:22.

²² Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Anyone who has purchased a home understands the purpose of earnest money. When you and the seller agree on a selling price of a home, the buyer sends in earnest money. This is a down payment to the seller, held onto until closing, that shows that the buyer is fully invested in the purchase of the home. Should the buyer break the contract and walk-away, the earnest money is forfeited, and the seller gets to keep it. In this same way, God reveals the Holy Spirit, which indwells the Christian at conversion, is the earnest, down payment, in our hearts. In other words, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is God's promise that He will fulfill the contract, if you will, a promise to fulfill His obligation.

This sealing is also called our inheritance in Ephesians 1:14.

¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The down payment received in the form of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the down payment and promise of the inheritance we will receive as Christians. In order for God to fulfill His promises toward us, He must deliver on the following: eternal life, protection from spiritual death, and an eternal dwelling place with Him.

Understanding the Holy Spirit's role in a form of down payment, or earnest, to the Christian, He is also our identification with Jesus Christ, our Savior, as seen in 2 Timothy 2:19.

¹⁹ Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this *seal*, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (italics mine)

All Christians have this seal, and no matter what happens, persecution, straying, going prodigal, etc, God knows who His children are based upon the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Remember, the Spirit is an advocate, as we saw earlier. And it is from this understanding that a prodigal child of God will reap the consequences of their straying and rebellion, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Seeing what the sealing of the Holy Spirit is, when it takes place, and its purpose, we must now consider how long the sealing lasts. Thankfully God does not leave us in the dark but rather gives us information as to how long this sealing lasts.

Keeping with our housing down payment analogy, the earnest money paid towards a house goes to either the closing costs or the remaining down payment. Either way, the earnest money is transacted and applied to the account. It is used to finalize the transaction of buying the home, closing all financial loose ends, and closing the deal. This is a similar picture of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life. He is the closer, He is the reason you maintain your eternal life, acting as an advocate, until God completes the transaction. God reveals

the duration of this sealing in Ephesians 1:14.

¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Until the redemption of the purchased possession. This redemption, buying back, occurs after this life. Whether at the rapture, the glorification of the body, or upon the blessed death of the believer. Once the purchased possession, i.e., the Christian, is redeemed, the transaction is fulfilled completely, the earnest money is applied to the account.

God continues this thought later in Ephesians 4:30, when he warns the Christian not to grieve or sadden the Holy Spirit. ³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Again, God mentions we are sealed by Him until the day we are fully redeemed, body and spirit. In various places of Scripture, we can see, contextually, the sealing of the Holy Spirit of God lasts until the redemption of the body.

Concluding Thoughts

After the final checkpoint, we reach the finish line. This finish line in the race is the moment that faith becomes sight, and we enter in the presence of the Lord in heaven (2 Timothy 4:7). Consider the three checkpoints we passed through, it should be clear that eternal life is secure because of the promise of

God, the present tense aspect of eternal life, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Free Grace Theology strongly affirms it is only because of God, and through God, that eternal life is possible and secure.

I give thanks to God for a salvation that is wholly and utterly dependent upon His work and His power.

Chapter 4:

Key Take-Aways

- A Christian has eternal security because of the character of God and the agency of the Holy Spirit.
- If a Christian needed to persevere to the end to have or maintain their salvation, then it would be a probationary security.
- The teaching of eternal security places the receiving, and maintaining of salvation, solely upon God, His power, and His promise.
- Unless a person is stronger than God, no one can escape the secure bond of which we are placed.
- The sealing of the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion is a revelator that a Christian is secure.
- Unless God breaks His own seal, the Christian is secure until the day of redemption.
- Just like receiving salvation, a Christian's security is only because of the character and promise of God, not on the maintenance of works.

Chapter 5

Rewards

The Graciousness of God

*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where
neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves
do not break through nor steal:
(Matthew 6:20)*

This is an aspect of God that truly reveals His marvelous and matchless grace! Not only did God see imperfect, flawed, sinful people and desire to offer redemption through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Not only does God eternally secure us in a relationship with Him upon faith. But God desires to reward those Christians who serve Him faithfully, with a pure heart. This is even more profound when one realizes that a Christian can only live a holy life, and produce fruit, because of the enabling work of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So, God, not only sees a need, sends a Redeemer, He also grants the Energizer who enables the Christian to be obedient and walk by the Spirit. And yet, God rewards the Christian who serves Him faithfully. That is amazing to me! We can do nothing apart from God, and yet the Christian, is rewarded because he is simply obedient to God's word. Let us expound upon this thought.

The Grace of Rewards

Within Free Grace Theology comes the realization that God is a generous and gracious Father who seeks to reward those who diligently serve Him. One example of His desire to reward is seen in the command of Jesus to believers, found in Matthew 6:19-20.

¹⁹ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Yes, Christians are commanded to seek treasures, or rewards, in heaven. Do we realize that? Many do not because they believe seeking rewards is a selfish ambition, even though it is commanded by Jesus Christ. It is not only this command during the Sermon on the Mount, but other passages reveal this same fact, such as the Parable of the Talents, in Matthew 25:14-30, below:

¹⁴ For [the kingdom of heaven is] as a man travelling into a far country, [who] called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. ¹⁵ And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. ¹⁶ Then he that had received the five talents went

and traded with the same, and made [them] other five talents. ¹⁷ And likewise he that [had received] two, he also gained other two. ¹⁸ But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. ²⁰ And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. ²¹ His lord said unto him, Well done, [thou] good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. ²² He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. ²³ His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. ²⁴ Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, [there] thou hast [that is] thine. ²⁶ His lord answered and said unto him, [Thou] wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: ²⁷ Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and [then] at my coming I should

have received mine own with usury.²⁸ Take therefore the talent from him, and give [it] unto him which hath ten talents.²⁹ For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.³⁰ And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This parable that Jesus taught reveals that each of these servants were given a certain number of talents. In the original language, a talent was a certain weight or sum of money. As the story goes, one servant received five talents, to another two talents, and to the final servant one talent. In the story we find out the one who had five talents gained five more by investing his original amount, thereby having ten total talents. The servant with two talents did likewise, and gained an additional two, making four total talents. However, the servant who was given one talent simply buried his talent in the earth until the master returned. Upon his return, the master rewarded the servants who invested their talents, to be rulers. They left the life of servitude, now onto ruling authority. However, with the servant who did not use or invest the talent given, but merely hid it in the ground, that servant received rebuke from the master.

This parable is part of a larger discourse that begins in Matthew 24:3, the Olivet Discourse, and is coupled with the Parable of the Two Servants and the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Each of these three parables are given in context of the question Jesus raises in verse 45:

⁴⁵ Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

These parables explain who a faithful servant is and who will receive the rewards of rulership because of their service. The teaching of rewards is a Biblical teaching based upon the gracious love of God and His desire to reward His faithful servants.

Positions on Earth

What are the various rewards that are possible for the Christian through faithful service? Some rewards are enjoyed during our time in this fallen world and some will wait for us to rule with Christ in the Messianic Kingdom. It is no doubt that God blesses and rewards people who diligently serve Him, and oftentimes by placing them in positions of influence or leadership. This can be in the realm of promotions, leadership in the workplace, opportunities for growth, more responsibilities. Abiding in the presence of Christ through fellowship and worship in word and prayer often leads to a growth in ability and responsibility for the kingdom of God, and in the workforce on earth.

Treasure in Heaven

Some rewards are unknown, categorized as treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:20) or gold, silver, and precious stone (1 Corinthians 3:12). These can be in reference to the adornment of the dwelling places Jesus promised to Christians upon their arrival in heaven (John 14:1-4). Or they can be in reference to

accoutrements on apparel that we may receive also. I personally do not know in what fashion the promised treasures are, but what I do know is they will be glorious and a picture of the grace of God.

The Five Crowns

Then there are references to crowns. While there is a debate of whether they are figurative or literal, I tend to view the promise of crowns being rewarded as a literal reward. The Bible speaks of five different crowns a Christian may receive, based upon their conduct while living here on earth.

The Incorruptible Crown, 1 Corinthians 9:24-25:

²⁴ Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. ²⁵ And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

This crown is a reward for the Christian who lives a faithful life of Christian service, in obedience to Jesus Christ through discernment and discipline.⁷ Does life seem to get you down? Are you tired, and struggling to continue going against the grain of society? Are you doing your best to live a godly life and leave a godly legacy to those around you? Take solace in the fact that your life of faithfulness is not overlooked by

⁷ Samuel L. Hoyt, *The Judgment Seat of Christ* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2015), p172.

God, who desires to reward you with the Incorruptible Crown.

The Crown of Rejoicing, 1 Thessalonians 2:19:

¹⁹ For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

To some, this crown is believed to be awarded to the Christian who continues to rejoice, have joy in the salvation of God and the blessing of living eternally with Him for eternity. It seems as though it takes the darkest days for us to hold on to the brightest hope of heaven and dwelling with God. However, let us not require darkness to see the glorious light, but rather let us extinguish all the darkness with the hope of the everlasting light which consumes us. Other scholars see this crown as the Soul Winner's Crown⁸ because of the great amount of rejoicing experienced by those who were used to lead others to the Lord.

The Crown of Righteousness, 2 Timothy 4:8:

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

⁸ Joseph C. Dillow, *Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Company, 2006), 574.

The crown of righteousness is believed to be given to all those who find their righteousness in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and not upon any work they do. Similar to the crown of rejoicing, these people eagerly await the return of Christ, and their reunion with Him. Some also see this crown symbolic of the valor that will be bestowed upon those who have lived a righteous, sanctified life here on earth.⁹

The Crown of Glory, 1 Peter 5:4:

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Contextually, it is believed this crown is possibly for those who are shepherding flocks, pastors, overseers, those in a spiritual position, serving faithfully under the guidance of Jesus Christ. This is because in verses 2-3, Peter is writing to those who are charged with leading the flock. A Christ-centered pastor, overseer, spiritual leader is a tremendous blessing to a congregation. And the one who serves faithfully has the ability to be rewarded for godly service with this crown.¹⁰

The Crown of Life, James 1:12:

¹² Blessed [is] the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of

⁹ Ibid, 576.

¹⁰ Ibid, 575.

life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

This crown seems self-explanatory and is detailing those Christians who have endured the trials of this life, and even suffered a martyr's death, for the faith in Jesus Christ.¹¹

Positions in the Messianic Kingdom

Other rewards will be positions of influence and leadership during the Messianic Kingdom, or even in the Eternal Order. This is seen in passages such as 2 Timothy 2:11-12:

¹¹ [It is] a faithful saying: For if we be dead with [him], we shall also live with [him]: ¹² If we suffer, we shall also reign with [him]: if we deny [him], he also will deny us:

Similar to the Parable of the Talents where each servant was given authority over different cities, or regions, this passage in 2 Timothy reveals the same. Christ will honor those who are faithful to Him with the honor of reigning with Him at His second coming. Matthew 19:27-28 is explained as a reward for “those Christians who are faithful to Him now will reign with Him then.”¹²

²⁷ Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? ²⁸ And Jesus said

¹¹ Ibid, 576.

¹² Ibid, 563.

unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Issuance of Rewards

The final aspect that reveals Christians are to work for rewards, as if the command of Jesus Christ was not enough, is the realization every Christian will be judged according to their works.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad.

Concluding Thoughts

If Christians are going to be judged according to the works they do, their faithfulness or lack thereof, that reveals the fact there will be rewards to gain, and rewards to be forfeited. Not everyone will receive the same rewards or treasures. As the Parable of the Talents teaches, some may receive more than others, while some may receive none at all, but stern rebuke for a Christian life which was buried in the earth. I pray you and I can be part of the former category and not the latter. But only an abiding relationship with Jesus will tell which category we will fall under.

Chapter 5:

Key Take-Aways

- Jesus Christ commands the Christian to seek rewards in heaven.
- The Parable of the Talents reveals the unprofitable servant is the one who did not invest their service in the Kingdom of God.
- God promises rewards in various facets, such as positions of influence on earth, treasure in heaven, the receiving of crowns (whether literal or figuratively), the rulership in the Messianic Kingdom, and more.
- While it is the enablement of the Holy Spirit that a Christian can do works acceptable to God, He still rewards those who serve Him.

Chapter 6

Discipline

A Necessary Component of Growth

*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth
every son whom he receiveth.
(Hebrews 12:6)*

Some opponents of Free Grace Theology like to bring up the notion that this view teaches a Christian can live however they like, without any consequences, and still go to heaven. Playing on the emotional side of the argument, they often use the extreme case of a professing Christian who becomes a mass murderer. This murderer is then argued that he is not a “genuine” Christian, else they would not have killed those people. While the argument sounds legitimate, it actually is an Invalid Inference Fallacy. In other words, just because the premises may be true (the person is a professing Christian, and that the professing Christian becomes a mass murderer), the conclusion does not necessarily follow. So, what is the deal with this murdering Christian?

What would you think if I told you if you harbored anger in your heart for another person, then you are

guilty of murder? It did not matter whether it is someone who treated you horribly, someone who persecuted you, or someone in the world you consider wicked? Would you see it the same as actually taking the physical life of another person, like this hypothetical mass murderer? Scripture actually records this in 1 John 3:15.

¹⁵ Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:
and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life
abiding in him.

Have you ever hated your kin? Or your countrymen? Have you hated anyone? It is a frightening thought to consider God equates hatred in our hearts for another person, as equivalent to the same murder that the opponents levy against Free Grace Theology. According then to their own theology, no one is a “genuine” Christian because everyone has hated someone at one point in their life. Or else, no one can have security of eternal life because while we may love today, we will hate tomorrow. Do you see how the hypothetical mass murderer argument, though sounding emotionally valid, is actually a theological conundrum? Thankfully the apostle John isn’t speaking about one having, obtaining, or keeping eternal life in this verse. Rather, he is speaking of the Christian who is not “abiding” in the eternal life he or she has; living in light of the life he or she has been given. This will be covered in more detail in the next chapter. At least now we have some understanding that, though an argument may sound reasonable, theologically it is impossible.

Free Grace Theology, while agreeing that a Christian may choose to live a life in disobedience and rebellion to God,

recalls their salvation is predicated upon the power, process, and promise of God (Chapter 3) and that eternal life is secured at the moment of salvation (Chapter 4). If then this is the case, what do we make of the Christian who lives in open rebellion to God? With this question, I want to let you in on my childhood.

A Personal Illustration

My brother and I were avid soccer fans and grew up playing soccer competitively in Maryland. He played as a forward while I dabbled a little in defense and center midfield. Living on Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, in a brick townhouse complex, I remember many days where we would use the side of the brick complex as a soccer goal, and we would take turns trying to score on one another. We later moved off-base to Clinton, where across the street from our house was Tanglewood Park. At Tanglewood, there was a baseball fence, you know, the fencing which is built behind the batter, catcher, and umpire. Sorry, I am not a baseball fan and do not know the terminology, but I can tell you what a rabona and cruyff soccer move is! Anyways, we would use that fence as the goal, and again, take turns trying to score. Needless to say, we always sought an opportunity to compete against one another. Enter, David Winter cottages. From what I could find out, David Winter cottages are made of some form of plaster. You can probably see where this is going. Back in the 1990s, there was a thing known as an entertainment center. This was a massive piece of wooden furniture that would house a big, boxy television, along with doors on the side and bottom for VHS storage, knick-knacks, and the bulky stereo system. Yes, VHS, do you remember

those? Well, my mother was just as much an avid fan as my brother and I were, except she was a fan of the David Winter cottages, and she had many of them on the top of the entertainment center, as well as on the shelves. Now, what do two boys, who love playing soccer, and always compete by trying to score a goal on each other, do with a big entertainment center in their living room? Naturally they take a small soccer ball and play soccer. Inevitably, we broke many David Winter cottages; mom, if you are reading this, Ben broke most of them. He cannot prove it otherwise, lol. I remember the first time we broke a cottage; we were scared. Scared because we knew our mother would find out, and that there would be repercussions. So many times, we attempted to glue them back together. It never seemed to work as my mother had developed a keen eye in discerning when something was broken in the house. I do not recall what the punishment was, but obviously there was the charge not to play soccer in the house. Do you think we listened? Of course not, until it happened again, and again, and again. Each time we received a stiffer punishment, being disciplined for our open rebellion and disobedience. However, no matter how often we disobeyed, or were in open rebellion, we were never removed from the Weierbach family. We were born unto my parents and as such, there was nothing that could be done to cast us from being their children.

This story, while amusing to some, illustrates the Free Grace understanding of the wayward and disobedient Christian. Yes, a Christian may choose to live however they like, but because of the eternal security of the believer, and salvation being wholly of God and not of man, the Christian remains as a blood-bought, child of God. They will give an account

for their actions through the consequences of discipline in the present. We also must not forget the additional accountability found in the coming judgment seat of Christ.

Free Grace Theology is the only system taking all of this biblical insight into a complete understanding of Christian discipline.

The Difference Between Positional & Practical Sanctification

In order to understand the role of discipline, one must realize there is a difference between positional sanctification (also commonly referred to as justification) and practical sanctification. Practical sanctification is commonly considered the process whereby one becomes more like Christ, while positional sanctification is the process whereby a person becomes justified in the sight of God. Practical sanctification comes through discipleship (Chapter 7), while positional sanctification only comes through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. The following verses explain the process of positional sanctification.

Romans 3:20, 24, 28

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin. ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Galatians 2:16

¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed

in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

These passages, and more, reveal works can never justify a person in the presence of God, and that positional sanctification is an act of God, by the finished work of Christ, given to the person who places faith in Him. So, if salvation, eternal life, is a “free” gift received solely through faith alone. And if one is eternally secure in the family of God due to God’s preserving power, process, and promise, then the Christian need not fear being cast into hell. What the rebellious, disobedient Christian does need to fear is the judgment seat of Christ.

God’s Discipline of Wayward Christian

Hebrews 10:26-27

²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

This warning passage in Hebrews is a stern warning given, not to the unbeliever, but to the Christian. We know this because of two main things. First, in verse 26, the author gives the pronoun “we”, making himself part of the group to which he is writing. He acknowledges that he could even fit in the category and the repercussions of which he speaks. Second, we know this because in verse 29 he mentions the punishment

of the person who was positionally sanctified, meaning they were a Christian, and yet has lived flippantly after his salvation.

²⁹ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Free Grace Theology holds to the belief that a rebellious, disobedient Christian will be punished, chastised, and at the very least, will give an account of their actions at the judgment seat of Christ (which is different from the Great White Throne judgment). In the same book, the author states that a Christian will indeed endure chastisement for these actions, and if they do not, then they are not a child of God.

Hebrews 12:6-8

⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

So, the question is not whether or not a Christian can live in open rebellion to God, because Scripture clearly mentions they can. The question is how long and how severe will that person's discipline be. And Scripture thankfully gives an answer here as well.

The Christian's Introspection

Discipline is a necessary part of growth in the fact that people need to be told what is right and wrong and have consequences for their actions. Raising two children into young adulthood, we have had to discipline them in various ways for numerous reasons. Now the discipline we administered as parents was dependent upon their age, understanding, as well as the severity of the action.

The Christian life is no different. There are times when God blesses us financially, relationally, materially, and many other ways. But there are also times when God removes those same blessings due to our disobedience. Have we ever considered that the suffering and situation we find ourselves may be due to our disobedience to God? The Psalmist details this very thought and how God's disciplining hand was a blessing which brought him back into fellowship with God.

Psalm 119:67, 71, 75

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. ⁷¹ [It is] good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. ... ⁷⁵ I know, O LORD, that thy judgments [are] right, and [that] thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

This is why the apostle Paul challenges Christians to examine to see whether we are living according to our faith.

2 Corinthians 13:5

⁵ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Paul was not concerned with them examining to see whether or not they were saved, but they were living a faithful Christian life. The concern of being a reprobate does not indicate one that is not in the family of God, for Paul uses the same Greek word in reference to his concern for his own self in 1 Corinthians 9:27.

²⁷ But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Paul's concern was not whether he had eternal life, but rather that his conduct (bringing his body into subjection) would not qualify him as being a castaway. The word castaway is the same Greek word for reprobate, *adokimos* (ἀδόκιμος)¹³ and in its simplest understanding means disapproved or rejected. In other words, Paul was speaking about living what he preached so his ministry would not be jeopardized by others who see him as a hypocrite. It has been explained that “the issue is not that Christians are to regularly examine their lifestyle to see if they are behaving good enough so as to question their salvation. It is to question their behavior regarding practical sanctification and realize the severity of consequences both

¹³ Blue Letter Bible, accessed May 2nd 2022, https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1co/9/27/s_1071027.

now (sickness and death - 1 Corinthians 11:28-30) and in the future (at the *bema* - 2 Corinthians 5:9-10) if they fail to obey the Lord.¹⁴

A Sin Unto Death

Living a hypocritical life as a Christian will bring judgment and discipline, eventually, from the disciplining hand of God. But unfortunately, this hypocritical life, the openly rebellious Christian, could even commit actions that are so damaging to the kingdom of God on earth, that they lose their own life. This is captured in 1 John 5:16.

¹⁶ If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pay for it.

This death could be caused by one or two things. First, it could have been caused by doing something completely reckless, causing one to lose their physical life, such as drinking and driving. But I also believe this sin unto death is something so egregious God decides to call that Christian home, preventing further damage to God's Kingdom on earth. While I do not believe historical narratives develop doctrine, I do believe they can illustrate doctrine. And in this case, I believe Sapphira and Ananias (Acts 5:1-10) are prime examples that John has in mind.

¹⁴ Fred Chay, "Examine Yourself to See If You Are in the Faith 2 Corinthians 13:5-6." *A Defense of Free Grace Theology: With Respect to Saving Faith, Perseverance, and Assurance*, edited by Dr. Fred Chay (TX: Grace Theology Press, 2017), 547.

The Bema Seat Judgment

Finally, as previously discussed, every single Christian will give an account for how they served Jesus Christ after receiving eternal life. This is referenced very clearly in 2 Corinthians 3:11-15.

¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

This passage is speaking of the Christian, because only the Christian has a foundation of Jesus Christ. The Christian has the ability to figuratively build upon their life with either precious gems or perishable material, and during the judgment seat of Christ, their works will be tested by the fire (a common picture of judgment). So, the Christian's service and obedience will be judged by Jesus Christ, and what remains will determine whether or not rewards are gained or lost, and if they will be considered a faithful or unfaithful servant. This may not mean much to the wayward Christian now, but great will be the emotion when Jesus Christ rebukes them, and they

realize how greatly they squandered the service and ministry they were called to!

Concluding Thoughts

As can be seen, discipline is a necessary component of growth. As a good parent will discipline their child when they disobey, do something that may harm themselves, or harm others, so too will God, who is a perfect Father, discipline His children when they do similar. The only difference is that God's discipline is perfect and ours need to be refined.

Chapter 6:

Key Take-Aways

- The emotional, hypothetical charge that one cannot be a “genuine” Christian if they commit murder is dismissed when one realizes that Jesus equates hate in our hearts as murder also.
- God’s discipline is rehabilitative tool in hope to have the Christian repent and return to fellowship with God.
- God’s discipline upon the Christian can come in the form of crises, sickness, loss of a job, estranged relationship, or possibly even death.
- The Christian should take time to reflect and consider whether the negative situation they are in is a result of disobedience to God, and His providential hand trying to bring him back.
- Christian will give an account of their service to Jesus following their adoption into God’s family.

Chapter 7

Discipleship

The Cost of Carrying Your Cross

*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him **deny himself, and take up his cross daily**, and follow me. (Luke 9:23)*

Years ago, there was a television show called “The Call of the Wildman.” It was a 30-minute program which took place in Kentucky and featured a country, redneck guy who went by the name of Turtle Man. The basic storyline of this show was if anyone had an animal control problem which was causing a nuisance to their home or farm, they would call Turtle Man to capture the animal. Turtle Man would get calls to remove turtles, snakes, possums, raccoons, and skunks very frequently. What I loved about Turtle Man was that he did not simply remove the animal and kill it, but rather he sought to rehome it in its natural environment. During the episodes, whenever Turtle Man was trying to catch the animal, the animal would get very frightened, not knowing what was going on or why. Therefore, it tried to run, hide, or even fight back and injure Turtle Man. Eventually, after being caught and rehomed, the animal would realize the entire struggle and fight he was

going through was for his own good, to be in an environment that was conducive for his well-being, survival, and growth.

Understanding Discipleship

The show Turtle Man is somewhat analogous to the life of the Christian. Sometimes a Christian is called by God into a period of trials. Sometimes God simply allows the trials of our life. Either way, the trials that we endure are for the purpose of discipleship or becoming more like Jesus Christ. Various passages reveal this such as:

Romans 5:3-5

³ And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; ⁴ And patience, experience; and experience, hope: ⁵ And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

2 Corinthians 4:17

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

James 1:2-4

² My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

1 Peter 1:6-7

⁶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

That is why Jesus refers to discipleship as carrying a cross. In discipleship we must die to our self and seek to live for God, in accordance with His will.

Luke 9:23

²³ And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Discipleship comes from the compound word of disciple (meaning learner or pupil) and the suffix -ship (meaning state or condition). Put together discipleship is simply the state or condition of being a pupil; and in Christianity, it is being a pupil of Jesus Christ. While salvation is easy, discipleship is costly. This is because discipleship, as the Lord says in the previous verse, requires a daily commitment to carry our own instrument of death, willingly. It means that we seek to forsake the desires we have and discern and fulfill the will of God. And this is very difficult, and seemingly impossible to perform daily. However, that is the call of the Christian, to be a disciple, grow in discipleship, and to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Process of Discipleship

So how is discipleship supposed to work? The answer is three-fold, as I believe there should always be three people in discipleship. The first is the individual who desires to be more like Christ. The second is a Christian mentor who the individual looks up to and by whom to be disciplined. Thirdly, there should be someone the individual is actively invested in discipling as well. Sadly, most of the Church lacks a desire for discipleship, and would rather seek cultural discipleship rather than Christ-centered discipleship. But we will save that for another book possibly in the future. For now, let us consider the three persons involved in Christian discipleship. For ease of following, we will call the first individual Curtis, the second, Al, and the third, Billy.

Curtis was saved at an early age and had great parents, but not a whole lot of Christian guidance or Bible reading. Therefore, through the years, Curtis began to be formed to the mold of the society in which he grew up. He enjoyed listening to ungodly, secular music because that was what he knew. His friends listened to it, and it was regularly on the radio at his home. Due to the constant influence of the music and society, he began to go down a path in life in which he got in trouble with the law a few times. It was his third time in jail when he realized, as an adult, something needed to change or he would end up in prison, or worse, dead. He remembered his youth pastor lived in the area, the same youth pastor that explained the free gift of salvation to him many years ago and lead him to the Lord. So, he decided to reach out to him once he was let out of jail. A few unsuccessful phone calls did not deter

Curtis. He finally was able to get a hold of the youth pastor, Al, and they had a great talk about the years that had gone by. Al realized Curtis had walked away from the Lord but reassured him that God was only a prayer away.

Al and Curtis met weekly at the local coffee shop, sipping on affogatos, and studying the life of Jesus Christ. Even though Al was married, had two children, and was a bi-vocational pastor of a church, he invested time with Curtis. Time that Curtis desperately needed. It did not happen overnight. But month after month, because of Curtis's desire to live more like Christ, Al's desire to see Curtis grow spiritually, and the constant bathing of their time in prayer, Curtis began to change. At first it was little changes such as not listening to the ungodly secular music. But then it slowly morphed into listening to Christian worship artists and bands. He put down the bottle, flushed the drugs, and focused on his relationship with Jesus, not his relationship with multiple women. Sure, there were moments when Curtis slipped back into his old ways, but the longer time spent in discipleship with Al, the less frequent those moments occurred. If you were to see Curtis today, you would have assumed he had been living for Jesus all his Christian life. But Curtis and Al both know that he had only been living for Jesus the last few months. Curtis was not merely changed, he was transformed.

As Curtis and Al continue to meet, Al challenged Curtis to consider using his victory testimony, a testimony of how God had delivered him from a selfish lifestyle to a godly lifestyle, in order to help grow another Christian, younger in the faith. That is when he met Billy. Billy was a 9-year-old boy who Curtis believed resembled him at that age. He had a similar

family situation, with similar parents and being the only child, a similar attraction to a secular culture, and getting into trouble, just on a smaller scale. Curtis prayed and felt the Lord asking him to disciple Billy, so as a stronger Christian man than he was years ago, Curtis obeyed. Curtis spoke with Billy's parents to see if they would be okay with him mentoring Billy, similar to other youth mentorship programs. The parents agreed. Billy loved playing basketball, so Curtis and Billy spent many days shooting hoops at the local YMCA. While there, Curtis had many opportunities to tell Billy of the love that God has for him, and a wonderful purpose for his life. As they continued meeting for basketball, Curtis allowed God to use his experiences and rebellion, as a prodigal Christian, to give Billy the Gospel message. This allowed Billy to realize, no number of bad deeds can keep us from the saving power of God. Billy became a Christian that day. And since then, the two of them have maintained a strong relationship with one another. Through the years, Billy got married to his high school sweetheart, and they had three children. Did I mention Billy became an evangelist, his wife was an amazing pianist, and his kids were in college preparing for missionary work? Billy would feel indebted to Curtis for investing time in him and sought to tell others about the transforming power of God.

The Power of Discipleship

This story, while fictional, happens all the time around the world. People like Curtis, who are a Christian, but have lacked godly influence in their life, have gone astray, prodigal many would say. Others would merely claim Curtis was not a “genuine” believer. But Al knew the difference between

salvation and sanctification. It was not Al's position or influence at the church, or in ministry that allowed him to successfully disciple Curtis. The success in the discipleship of Curtis was due to Curtis's burden to change, and Al's desire to mentor. And we cannot forget the bathing of prayer through the entire process. Because of the investment in Curtis's life, he felt God asking him to tell Curtis to find someone to disciple. Billy would never meet Al, but Billy may never have been who he was if Al never disciplined Curtis. Nor would Billy not be who he was if Curtis never desired to become more like Christ. And dare I say Billy may not have been who he was had God not allowed Curtis to go astray, get in trouble with the law, and then use his victory testimony to reach Billy? Who knows the mind of God? All we know is three lives were changed. Billy was saved, Curtis was reconciled, and Al was rewarded. And all of it is only because of the power, influence, and love of God to reach out to whosoever, through a willing and obedient soul.

The Necessities of Discipleship

This story reveals a few necessities of discipleship. First, there is one's desire to become more like Christ. God uses discipline to bring us to repentance, a change in our thoughts regarding our lifestyle. As discussed in the previous chapter, God uses discipline to bring Christians back in a right fellowship with Him. Sometimes it takes an accident, other times it means losing the financial security of a job. Sometimes it is the clanging of our jail cell closing which gets our attention. That is why we must consider whether or not we are abiding in fellowship with God or going astray. If we

go astray, maybe the struggles we go through are actually the blessings of God's providential hand reaching down to correct our path.

Another necessity of discipleship is accountability. This is a word that is frowned upon in the American society, as we relegated God's living word to a misunderstood catch phrase, "only God can judge me." Accountability is a key aspect of discipleship. For the one desiring discipleship needs to be held accountable if they deter from the path of godliness, as seen in Galatians 6:1.

¹ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Now I would not encourage someone who has not invested in another's life to try and call out all the sin in their life. That will most likely do nothing but drive the Christian further away from God. No, we must seek to invest in a relationship with the prodigal Christian, so they know our care and love for them, and our desire for them to reach their spiritual goal, of becoming more like Christ. This means, the one desiring discipleship, and the one doing the discipling, need to determine what accountability measures are necessary and what they want to be accountable for. I have disciplined many people and that is a regular question I ask. We come to an agreement and then if, or when, they fail in that area they sought accountability for, then we have already agreed how we are going to handle it. Discipleship is growing together.

A final necessity, though much more can be written on the aspect of discipleship, is that of burden bearing, taught in Galatians 6:2-6.

² Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. ³ For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

⁴ But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵ For every man shall bear his own burden.

⁶ Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

No Christian is called to go through the Christian life alone. And those who claim they do not need church are those which are in active disobedience to God, as they are not, at the very least, invested in discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20). Here in Galatians, Christians are told to bear one another's burden, while also revealing there may be some burdens we are called to carry alone. (Note: The Greek word for burden in verse 2 and verse 5 are different, *baros* (βάρος) vs *phortion* (φορτίον) and carry different meanings)¹⁵ Verse 2 is clear a Christian can have troublesome burdens, moral faults and failings, which another Christian needs to come alongside and help them through. This means investing in another's life, allowing the individual to know you care and love them, and being trustworthy for them so they can open up and let you in their personal life.

¹⁵ Blue Letter Bible. accessed May 4th, 2022, https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gal/6/2/s_1097002.

Concluding Thoughts

In its simplest understanding, discipleship is merely doing Christian life together. And that is why many people do not disciple, because it is hard, and it can be discouraging. Hard because it takes a commitment of time, spiritual energy, and prayer. Discouraging because when the one being discipled continues to slip-up, Satan can build up discouragement in our minds. Again, while salvation is easy, discipleship is costly. Free Grace Theology elevates the ministry of discipleship as a necessary component of practical sanctification, realizing there are some people who have lacked spiritual influence and have become stagnant in their walk with Christ. It is not that they are not a “genuine” Christian, but that they need to be discipled.

Chapter 7:

Key Take-Aways

- Christian discipleship is the state or condition of learning to become more like Jesus Christ.
- A wayward Christian does not need to be re-saved, they need to be disciplined.
- There should be three people involved in discipleship: person “A” being disciplined, person “B” disciplining person “A,” and person “A” seeking to disciple person “C.”
- While salvation is easy, discipleship is costly.
- When Jesus speaks of carrying one’s cross to follow Him, it is in reference to being a disciple, not being a believer. It is unfortunate, but one can be a believer while not seeking to be a disciple.
- Discipleship requires accountability to another Christian. One must earn the right to rebuke another Christian if it is to be accepted. This right comes through ensuring the other person that their best interest is in mind.
- Most churches lack a discipleship program, or focus. One key reason the Western church is in disarray is because the lack of emphasis on discipleship.

Chapter 8

The Character of God

Salvation is Wholly Dependent Upon God's Character

*For I am the LORD, I **change not**; therefore ye sons
of Jacob are not consumed.
(Malachi 3:6)*

In 2021, I had the privilege of interviewing former homicide detective, and author of *Cold Case Christianity*, J. Warner Wallace. In this interview, we discussed many hard-hitting questions that centered around some key attributes of God, such as: sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence. But one key question I had asked him during the interview was how we could determine whether or not the Gospel writers were eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus Christ, and His resurrection: or in Luke's case, reporting eyewitness testimony. As a former homicide detective, Wallace had some excellent insight, paralleling his work as a detective with investigative work into the reliability of the Gospels. Wallace details this quite in-depth in *Cold Case Christianity* and lists 14 questions to ask in determining if an eyewitness can be trusted. One of those questions is "what is the witness's character for

truthfulness?”¹⁶ If someone is on the stand, and the attorney is able to reveal character flaws of the witness, then many times the jury will dismiss, or at the very least question, what the individual is saying. Character leads to credibility and trustworthiness. This is true, not only in the judicial scene, but in everyday lives as well. We choose to hang-out with certain people, make pledges and agreements with others, based upon their credibility and trustworthiness, e.g., character. There are a lot of passages in Scripture which detail how a Christian’s character is supposed to be characterized by holiness, as a reflection of Jesus Christ. Character traits such as love, grace, mercy, truth, virtue, patience, faith, etc. There is no denying one person’s character is vital in trusting who they are and the promise they make.

Overemphasizing, or Undervaluing God’s Character

While people seem to instinctively understand this within sociology, not being deceived by those with questionable character, it is as if in Christian theology, we forget these principles. Some theological circles overemphasize God’s character of sovereignty that it places the sole condition upon one becoming a child of God upon God’s sovereign decree. This is mainly because one fears if God is not sovereign in salvation, and man has a volitional choice in the matter, then God loses His sovereignty. However, an overemphasis on God’s sovereignty undervalues God’s love. For while those circles can argue God’s love is great to save those whom He decreed, it is in-turn seen His

¹⁶ J. Warner Wallace, *Cold Case Christianity*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing, 2013), 71.

love is not enough for those whom He condemned to hell. In other theological circles, people devalue His mercy and only focus on His holiness, leading to the false theological position that one can lose their salvation because they do not maintain a state of holiness. Is it possible there can be reconciliation between God's love and His sovereignty, while allowing mankind to choose to believe or not? Must God's mercy and His holiness be put at odds with each other? In apologetics, there is a logical fallacy known by many names, such as the Either/Or fallacy, False Dilemma, or False Dichotomy. This fallacy erroneously states there are only two alternatives, when in actuality there could be more. This fallacy is revealed in theological circles when the argument is made that if one is not a Calvinist, they must be Arminian; and vice-versa, as if one must stake their flag in one of these theological camps. That is the main purpose of this book, to explain there are options other than Arminianism and Calvinism, by providing a sketch of what is known as Free Grace Theology.

Five Main Traits of God

Back to understanding the character of God and how it relates to one's positional standing in Christ. Scripture does record that God is holy (1 Peter 1:16), God is love (1 John 4:8), God is merciful (Luke 6:36), God is gracious (Titus 2:11), and God is sovereign (Isaiah 46:10). While there are many other attributes of God we could discuss, these attributes are key in understanding a Free Grace position of Soteriology.

Holy: the holiness of God reveals how He is distinct from all creation, not bound by any of the constraints He has designed. Furthermore, with His holiness, He cannot dwell in the presence of sin; hence the need for a Savior to come and reconcile mankind back to God.

Love: while there are three or four types of love mentioned in Scripture, the love used in relation to God is the Greek word *agape* (ἀγάπη).¹⁷ Most scholars simplistically explain that this type of love is a sacrificial and unconditional type of love; no strings attached.

Merciful: God's mercy reveals His compassion for His creation and His desire to forgive one's thoughts and actions, due to His desire for relationship and restoration. Many have mentioned that mercy is simply not getting the punishment one deserves.

Gracious: while mercy has commonly been taught not getting punishment one deserves, grace has been said receiving something good which is not deserved; or unmerited favor.

Sovereign: sovereignty is seen as the rulership of God and the fulfilling of His decretive will

¹⁷ Blue Letter Bible. accessed June 8th, 2022, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g26/kjv/tr/0-1/>.

throughout all affairs in the visible and invisible realm. To some, nothing is done apart from His sovereign, decreed, foreordained plan.

Again, these are simplistic, rudimentary definitions of these characteristics, but these definitions suffice to explain how God's character is seen in one's salvation, according to Free Grace Theology.

The Holiness of God

The holiness of God is an attribute which is rarely mentioned in many the pulpits today. As the Seeker Sensitive movement continues to gain steam, and Progressive Christianity gains a firmer foothold in the church sanctuaries, less is discussed about God's holiness and righteousness. And this is truly unfortunate. While many churches are more concerned with filling pews with people, fewer are filling hearts with Scripture. One of the keys of Scripture memorization and meditation is, as the Psalmist wrote, so we would not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11). The problem with the Seeker Sensitive movement and Progressive Christianity is that many do not have God's word in their hearts, and that is why we are seeing such relativism creep into the Western church. There are more attempts to not sin against man than there are against God.

God's holiness dictates sin cannot dwell in His presence, and since He is holy, He must judicially deal with sin. This can be understood by considering the position of a judge. A judge in a courtroom has the obligation to uphold the state and federal laws, since they

have been put in place to allow for good order and discipline within the community. The laws themselves are a shadow of the moral compass of the community, and the characteristics the community strives after. If a judge ignores the laws he has sworn to uphold, there is the possibility, and likelihood of the judge's permanent removal from the bench, or at the least, a suspension. The judge is there to uphold the laws that govern the community.

Similar to the judge, God is The Judge (Psalm 50:6; Isaiah 30:18; Malachi 2:17), who not only obeys the laws which govern creation, but is the Creator of those laws as well. Therefore, if a good judge would keep a lawbreaker accountable to the law placed over them, God must also hold people to the standards of the law which He has placed upon the world. These laws God has decreed are not because He is a vindictive or tyrannical God, but rather that through the laws people would see their need for Him and have the ability to dwell in His presence. Just as laws are the moral compass of a community, God's laws are intrinsic of His holiness and character. One final thing about the holiness of God is that, because holiness is the intrinsic trait of God Himself, then He has the ability to grant this holiness to those who place their faith in Him. This process, known as imputation, allows for one to receive God's righteousness (i.e. Christ's righteousness) applied to their account, because He is perfectly holy and righteous. If not for God's holiness, there would be no promise of a utopian Kingdom ushered in by the Messiah with the complete eradication of sin. God's holiness is a necessary attribute, for righteous

ruling, righteous accountability, and righteous giving. Salvation is dependent upon the holiness of God.

The Love of God

God's love is revealed in the cross of which Jesus suffered, and bled, and died upon for the sins of the world. Merely a day before He bore the cross for sins, He told the apostles there is no greater love than one die for their friends (John 15:13), a glimpse into the realities of Jesus's penal substitutionary atonement. Again, the apostle John reiterated this great love of God showcased upon the cross of Calvary (1 John 4:9-10). Profoundly, we read God took this great action of love, while we were enemies of Him (Romans 5:8). There is no denying the great love of God motivated the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, in order to reconcile unholy man to a holy God. The question then is asked, who does God love? And for whom was God's sacrifice of love made? We need to look no further than the most well-known verse in the Bible, known by believers and unbelievers alike; John 3:16...*For God so loved the world.*

The love of God is extended to the world, all mankind. Unlike what some try and posit, His love is not only for a select group of people, nor is it found within the Greek that the word *world* is anything other than the mass of humanity. Free Grace Theology realizes God's character of love is for the world, as He reached down to us, and provided redemption through Jesus Christ, for all who believe. Salvation is dependent upon the love of God.

The Mercy of God

While contextually speaking of God's providence and protection of the Jewish nation of Israel, Lamentations 3:22 very clearly reveals His mercy.

²² It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

Written by the prophet Jeremiah, during the time of one of Judah's most egregious periods of history, Jeremiah details how the city of Jerusalem is desolate and destroyed by her enemies, because of the Jewish people's wickedness (Lamentations 1:8-9). Anyone who has tracked the history of Israel, from Egypt to the first advent of Messiah, realizes the continuous rebellion and spiritual idolatry that the nation has committed against God. From the murmurings of the Jewish people in the Wilderness during the Exodus, the cyclic process of rebellion during the period of Judges, the nation's desire to no longer be a Theocratic nation in 1 Samuel, the splitting of the two Kingdoms into the Northern Kingdom and Judah with all the wicked kings of the Northern Kingdom leading to their Assyrian captivity, the spiritual idolatry of Judah, leading to their Babylonian captivity in the book of Kings, the lack of complete desire to rebuild the Temple after release from Babylon in Nehemiah, and the wickedness of the Levitical priests during the Temple operation in Malachi. I could go on and on about the rebellion and the desire to follow the futility of man rather than God, but this suffices. When one contemplates all these atrocities and realizes this was a nation which was chosen of God to bear His name

(Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2; Psalm 135:4; Isaiah 44:1); and that no other nation personally knew God the way the Israelites did, one comes to the realization it is only because of God's great mercy that Israel was not utterly destroyed. However, God promised early Israel would remain, and that the Messiah would come from a particular tribe of Israel as well (Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 9:6). The protection and preservation of the nation of Israel is because God's sovereignty and His mercy. This is the great truth found within Lamentations 3:22.

But before we get on our metaphorical high horse, realize you and I have lived the same life of the Israelites. There has not been perfect obedience, there has been at times spiritual idolatry, as well as rebellion. You and I are no different from the Jewish nation in this regard. It is of God's mercy we are not consumed as well. God could punish us for every single breaking of the law, every deviation from His will, and every moment we place something in a higher priority than Him...yet His mercy continues to extend in those moments. This is because, through God's mercy, He is still reaching down to guide people back to Him. This mercy is even extended to those who do not know Him, for His desire is for them to be brought into His family (Romans 11:30-32). Salvation is dependent upon the mercy of God.

The Grace of God

God's grace is a trait that is preached from many pulpits, and rightly so. The grace of God is an amazing picture of God's

love for all people, in that it is extended and offered to whosoever. In considering one's salvation, we know the opportunity for eternal life is only due to the grace God extended to mankind (Ephesians 2:8-9). There was absolutely nothing we could do to remove our sins and dwell in the presence of the holy God. Therefore, in His compassionate grace, God came and offered us the opportunity for redemption. Grace is known by another term, a gift. Unfortunately, many has misunderstood this crucial aspect of salvation, and sought to tie one's salvation to the strings of works, perseverance, or maintenance. But if a gift is given based upon a work, perseverance, or maintenance, then it is no longer a gift, but rather a debt, or wage.

Paul demolishes this view when he illustrates Abraham and his reception of eternal life by simple faith. He states that if Abraham was justified, or saved by works, then while he could boast before man, he could not boast before God (Romans 4:2). This is because if Abraham received his righteousness and became justified based upon his faith in God's promise (Romans 4:3), then it had to be of grace (Romans 4:4). This is because the only possible way to receive God's imputed righteousness is by grace through faith (Romans 4:5; Ephesians 2:8-9). There is no other way one can receive eternal life.

Every year on December 25th my family celebrates Christmas and the Savior's birth. Part of the celebration is the giving and receiving of presents. And every single year, our children had been privileged to receive presents, not only from Rebecca

and I, but also from other family members and friends. In receiving these presents, there were no strings attached.

Neither of our children had to do anything to receive these gifts. Nor did they have to endure or continue doing certain things to keep the gift. No. On this day of the year, they received presents freely. Did it matter that they had their moments throughout the year of murmuring, rebellion, or being caught doing things they should not be doing? It did not. The next week, when our kids started into their normal sinful behavior of arguing, fighting, and the like, did we take their presents back? Of course not. We may have temporarily prevented them from playing with their gifts, but they never had to return them because of their behavior. It was grace we extended, motivated by our love for them, to give them these free presents. And it was our mercy not to take them back from them after we gave them. I imagine you do the same things for Christmas time as well.

Now, if we do this as earthly parents, exhibit this amount of mercy, grace, and love, would God not be an even better Father, exhibiting those traits to a much greater degree? God's grace grants us the ability to receive the free gift of salvation, but just as our kids had to receive the presents at Christmas, so to must we receive the free gift of salvation by faith. God offers it to whosoever (John 3:16), but whosoever must willingly receive it. Salvation is dependent upon the grace of God.

The Sovereignty of God

Finally, we come to the sovereignty of God. While many see

hell as the eternal abode of those who did not receive the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, understand two things. First, the idea of hell being an eternal abode is unbiblical because hell is a temporary holding place for those who did not receive the free gift offered by Jesus Christ. Temporary in the sense one day hell will be cast into the Lake of Fire, which is the actual eternal abode for all those who received not the imputed righteousness of Christ (Revelation 20:14). Secondly, we see in Scripture that hell was prepared for the devil and the demons (Matthew 25:41); God did not intend for any human being to be cast into hell. Therefore, if God prepared hell, not for mankind but for the demons, and if some people end up in hell, then does that mean God is not sovereign? God forbid! It is a False Dichotomy to believe such a thing.

Realize there is a decretive will and a permissive will. This is explained in two key passages. In 2 Peter, we read God desires no one to perish, but that all would come to repentance:

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

If God is not willing anyone should perish, then why do some perish? It is because while God does have a decretive will, this verse reveals His permissive will. Permissive in the fact that while He desires all to come to know Him, He permits the freewill of mankind to take the path he or she decides to take.

The other passage that reveals the permissive will of God is found in 1 Timothy.

1 Timothy 2:3-4

³ For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; ⁴ Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Again, we see it is God's will that all people are saved and come to know the truth, yet we clearly understand this will of God is not fulfilled because many were not and are not saved. Therefore, while God does have a will, it must be determined whether the context reveals the particular will is decretive or permissive.

These passages do not question God's sovereignty, and His ability to decree and ensure things come to pass, it merely illustrates the false dichotomy which is prevalent within theological camps. God's decretive will is seen in the coming of the Messiah, the ministry of Messiah, the fulfilling of all Messianic prophecies by the Messiah, and the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah. That was a sovereign, decretive will of God, to ensure the substitutionary atonement was made for all mankind. This sovereign decree was put in place before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20), not merely as God saw a need. Also, God's decretive will is seen in His sovereign decree that anyone who placed faith in Him would have, and maintain, eternal life (John 1:12; 3:16; 6:37; Ephesians 1:3-14). Therefore, sovereignty must be understood in light of the Scripture rather than in light of man's definitions. While God does rule the entire created

cosmos, He does allow certain things to go against His desire, and although they are against His permissive will, He still sovereignly allows it.

God's decretive will is unveiled with His unfailing, sovereign plan of redemption for mankind. That even though He desires all to be saved, and His permissive will allows for those who reject Him to be able to reject Him, His plan of redemption has never failed. From the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, throughout the rest of history, Satan has been attempting to thwart God's redemptive story. He tried corrupting the seed of man before the Flood (Genesis 6:1-4), plotted killing the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:16-18), attempted to cause Jesus to sin (Matthew 4:1-11), and tried on numerous times to have the religious leaders kill Jesus before Calvary (John 5:18, 8:59, 10:31). But because the plan of redemption for mankind has already been decreed (1 Peter 1:20), there was nothing that would stop this decretive will of God. From the Garden to the cross, God's sovereign plan of Jesus's sacrifice for the sins of man had always been accomplished. Salvation is dependent upon the sovereignty of God.

Concluding Thoughts

Seeing the many characteristics of God, and how they dovetail one another, paints a clear picture of God's love for the world, His desire for all to be saved (even though many do not), the grace and mercy extended to all, and His requirement for holiness in His presence. However, it is an unfortunate reality that some circles overemphasize one character trait over another, thereby neglecting

other traits of God, creating a caricature of Him that fits their theology. Or as David Dunlap mention, “the view of God’s sovereignty has been found to impugn the holy character of God.”¹⁸

The Free Grace view of one’s eternal salvation is dependent upon the character of God, and not upon any necessity of man to do or maintain. One’s eternal life depends entirely upon God’s good character. The goodness of God’s character is found in His holiness, love, mercy, grace, and sovereignty. God’s holiness requires pure righteousness to be able to dwell with Him, and as the only pure righteous One, He is able to offer this righteousness to whosoever. God’s love is so great that it extends to the vilest of sinners, seen by Jesus’s death for all, even while man was an enemy of Him. God’s mercy is granted to all people for a period of time to allow a moment of turning to Him in faith for reconciliation. God’s grace is the only viable way to receive salvation because the righteousness He offers is only because of what He does and not available because of anything we may be able to do. And finally, God’s sovereignty allows for His plan of redemption, from the foundations of the universe to Calvary, to be fulfilled without any fear of disruption or destruction from Satan. Free Grace Theology understands salvation is wholly dependent upon the character of God. I thank God for His unfailing character in whom I may trust!

¹⁸ David Dunlap, *Limiting Omnipotence: The Consequences of Calvinism* (ON, Canada: Gospel Folio Press, 2014) 74.

Chapter 8:

Key Take-Aways

- God is characterized as a trustworthy Person.
- God is holy, loving, merciful, gracious, and sovereign. No one trait contradicts or overrules another.
- Some theologies overemphasize the sovereignty of God, to the neglect of His love, while others overemphasize His holiness to the neglect of His mercy.
- God has a decretive will and a permissive will. With both wills, God sovereignly either decrees events to come to pass (decretive) or allows His will at times to be disobeyed (permissive).
- Although mankind is depraved, it is only because of God's mercy that we have not been utterly destroyed.

Chapter 9

Admonitions & Possibilities

Why All the Negative Commands to Christians?

*Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off
the old man with his deeds;
(Colossians 3:9)*

Rebecca and I are blessed with two children through our 20+ years marriage. At the time of this writing, one is still living with us while the other moved away to Montana. It was a joy watching them grow up through the infant stage, on to the toddler stage, then on to the kid, teenage, and young adult stage. Each stage of life brought its own joys and challenges. As an infant, there was not much expected of our children in terms of obedience. If they were crying and we wished them to stop, for whatever reason, they would not listen to our pleas to stay quiet, but yet had resolve to continue crying, seemingly for no reason. Those of you who have children know exactly what I am talking about. However, as they grew to being a toddler, obedience was beginning to be formed. At the toddler stage, they could understand basic right from wrong, and if they did something that we did not approve of, we could tell them “no” and they could decide if they wanted to obey or not. This would continue as they grew through the kid and

teenage ages. The thing about childrearing is that there were warnings, admonitions for them not to do certain things. For instance, not to hit the cat, or not to hit each other, or not to talk back to us as parents. Do you think our children listened to us and our house rules? Of course they did. Sike! They did just what we did as kids, disobeyed and lived life how they wanted, to a certain extent. Now they were great kids, and still are, but they were disobedient sinners, just like you and I. Did I know there was a chance, and probability of them not listening? I sure did. Did I believe they could be perfect little angels by themselves? I never thought that for a moment. So why did I give these admonitions? Because as the parent, I tried to get them to realize Rebecca and I knew what was best for them while they tried to navigate life as a baby, child, teenager, and now as a young adult. Just because I knew they would disobey at times, and I knew they could not be perfect, I still gave guidelines and rules, to help protect them and give them the best chance for success in life. Did we disown them, give them up for adoption, anytime they disobeyed? Of course not! They knew no matter how they behaved, their biological relationship with us was never going to change. They would always be in the Weierbach family.

I like analogies between family relationships and our relationship with God because as a Father, He is much better than I could ever dream of being. And if I would never disown my child, how could I believe God would ever disown me for being rebellious at times?

Admonitions & Negative Commands from God

In Scripture, God gives admonitions in many places, regarding various situations, because, as the Author and Creator of life, He knows how best to navigate and live this life to the fullest. And if I, as a human father, with limited knowledge, believe my children will not perfectly obey my rules, would not Almighty God have perfect knowledge, knowing we would be unable to perfectly obey His rules also? This is why Scripture is replete with admonitions. An admonition is a warning or caution for someone to obey, similar to my analogy above. In the Pauline epistles, there are many verses which are considered negative commands, negative in the sense of commanding what someone is not to do.

A casual reading of Ephesians 4:17-32 sheds light on some of these negative commands from God. They are:

- 4:17, walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the
vanity of their mind
- 4:22, put off the former [corrupt] conversation
- 4:25, put away lying
- 4:26, let not the sun go down on your wrath
- 4:27, neither give place to the devil
- 4:28, steal no more
- 4:29, let no corrupt communication proceed
out of your mouth
- 4:30, grieve not the Holy Spirit
- 4:31, let bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil
speaking, and malice be put away

Just in this one passage alone, there are 14 negative commands that are given by God through Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In order to truly understand this point, we must discern to whom this letter is addressed. For this answer, we consult Ephesians 1:1, where it is addressed to the saints at Ephesus. Their designation of saints reveals their positional sanctification, that they are children of God by faith (John 1:12). We confirm this from Ephesians 1:13 where Paul clearly articulates the audience *trusted*, *believed*, and was *sealed*. These are Holy Spirit indwelt, justified believers in Christ. They are saved.

So, if this letter is addressed to Christians, and we know one's salvation is secure the moment of conversion (Chapter 4), then this passage in Ephesians reveals 14 bad things a Christian can do while saved. According to this list of Paul, a Christian can walk according to their flesh, live according to their old life before Christ, can lie, be used of Satan, be a thief, be a foul-mouthed sailor with no words of edification, while harboring bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, malice, and more. And I have not even talked about the two letters Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers! But ask anybody of the reformed persuasion, and most will argue someone with this characterization is not a "genuine" Christian. Ask any Arminian, and most will argue that Christian has lost, or is in danger of losing their salvation. However, ask any of the Free Grace ilk, and most will articulate this Christian, while still a Christian, has a fearful looking time of chastisement from their Father, and the rebuke at the judgment seat of Christ, for a pitiful service to the King.

The Greek Subjunctive Mood

While the negative commands in Scripture reveal how unprofitable and wicked a Christian may be, the mood tenses in the syntax reveals the fact that a Christian is not guaranteed to progress in a godly lifestyle.

While I do not claim to be a Greek scholar, or even able to read the Septuagint or pronounce Greek words accurately, it is possible to understand the syntax through various tools available. So, do not fear if you are trying to understand how a Greek sentence is put together, for lexicons, dictionaries, and parsing are great aides in discovering the finer details of God's word. So, it is not necessary to become a Greek linguist in order to understand basics of Greek syntax. Although, doing so will allow a greater understanding of the sentences and meanings in the original language. One of the best and easiest ways to understand Greek words and how they are used is through a process called parsing.

Parsing is the process of breaking down a sentence to determine the words, cases, moods, voices, tenses, etc. Through parsing, one can see how the verbs work with nouns, how nouns are described by adjectives, and adjectives expanded upon by adverbs. The same rules of parsing apply to Greek as they do to English, however with Greek there are various nuances. While I do not want to, nor would I be able to fully explain the various nuances of the Greek syntax, I do want to highlight what is known as the "mood" in the Greek language. And from the "mood" we can see that a Christian can live a certain life contrary to the ways of God, and still be

a Christian. Albeit heading towards the discipline and chastisement by a holy God (Chapter 6).

What is a mood? In grammar, the mood simply reveals the reality of a verb, and whether the verb is a statement of fact, a statement of potentiality, or a statement of instruction or command. While there are more, three common moods found in the Greek language are: Indicative, Imperative, and Subjunctive. Simplistically, the indicative mood is *what is currently happening*. The imperative mood is *what is commanded or instructed to happen*. And the subjunctive mood is *what may or should happen*. Or in other words, what I am currently doing (indicative), what I am commanded or instructed to do (imperative), and what I should do (subjunctive). We see these in action in the following passages.

For example, in Matthew 28:17, when the apostles *worshipped* Jesus upon the shore, the mood for *worshipped* is Indicative. It is simply stating the fact the apostles worshipped Jesus. The Imperative Mood is revealed in the passage which is commonly known as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). Here the verb *teach* (i.e. *make disciples*) is in the Imperative mood, meaning Jesus Christ is not suggesting the apostles (or Christians) make disciples, but rather Jesus is commanding they do so. The Subjunctive Mood is seen in Ephesians 2:10 where Paul writes that God prepared good works that we *should walk* in them.

A cursory understanding the subjunctive moods of the Scripture reveals a Christian does not automatically become more like Christ. The mere fact we have a

subjunctive mood, of which God tells the Christian what they *should* do, highlights the fact it is possible the Christian may not do that very thing. Just as we saw all the negative commands in one small passage of Ephesians, the subjunctive mood reveals that growth and spiritual maturation is not automatic but must be accompanied by a desire for discipleship. Therefore, it is possible for a Christian to live contrary to the ways and requirements of God.

Concluding Thoughts

Alluded by the title of this chapter, if being a Christian meant one was going to continue in good deeds from the moment of conversion until death, then why all the admonitions to continue, to work, or to serve? If being a “genuine” Christian meant there must not be unfruitful works of darkness, then why all negative commands? The mere fact the Bible abounds with cautionary words addressed to the Christian, and the subjunctive mood revealing the fact a Christian may not do certain things God commands, argues a Christian is not perfect, and can in fact live as a friend of the world and be at enmity with God.

Just as my opening analogy of my children and their disobedience pointed out, the Free Grace position understands a Christian can live according to their flesh and according to the world, while still being in the family. But that this same Christian will suffer shame and scorn at the judgment seat of Christ, while also receiving the chastisement of the Father for correction in hopes of reconciliation back to Him.

Chapter 9:

Key Take-Aways

- The fact God cautions Christians not to do certain things, and tells Christians to stop doing other things, means that Christians can live in, and practice a sinful lifestyle.
- Scripture never records that God is asking a Christian to question their faith, only to question whether they are actively living their faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).
- If God tells the Christian that they *should* do something, then it reveals that obedience does not come natural or automatic after salvation.

Chapter 10

Practical Living

Free Grace Theology in Action

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may
see your good works, and glorify your Father
which is in heaven.
(Matthew 5:16)*

I started playing soccer from a young age, probably around 6 years old or so. Having played the world's most popular sport for over 13 years, I have learned quite a lot about the game! Everything from the positions, playing style, strategies, various leagues, necessity of communication on the pitch, the impact team chemistry has on a team, even the origins of the sport. Much knowledge was acquired during my time on and off the field. If you have played soccer growing up, or have friends or family in the sport, you may recall how soccer is played by the 5- and 6-year old's; a soccer term affectionally called *bunch ball*. It is called *bunch ball* because the kids do exactly that, they bunch up around the ball. It is so funny to watch these young children play the sport because while you may not see the soccer ball on the field, you know exactly where it is, in the middle of the group of kids. At that age, when they are simply learning the mechanics, there is no thought of strategy, making runs, crosses, finding open space,

or even giving through balls. No, they just want to kick the ball. And at that age, they are still trying to learn the rules, because oftentimes, a kid, anxious to get a goal, will score on their own team because they see a goal and want to kick the ball in the net. Eventually as these kids get older, they learn more about the sport, more about strategy, and more about the need to maintain their position and find open space. This is most-often done during practice, when the coach has time to teach, explain, show, and allow the kids to practice what they are learning.

The whole point of practice is not simply to acquire the knowledge of how to make a good through ball or how to perform a good offsides-trap. The point of practice is to acquire the knowledge in order to apply it when it is game time. Eventually, the bunch ball team matures into a competitive travel club team where they compete against the best in the state and region; all because they acquired knowledge and applied that knowledge on the pitch. Without application of the soccer knowledge, it remains that, simply knowledge.

In a similar vein, the previous nine chapters are not merely to teach knowledge of the basics of Free Grace Theology. It is so much more. While this theological knowledge is vital (the soccer team must know the mechanics, rules, and strategies of the game), it must be determined how to apply it to our lives. As my pastor regularly told me to ask myself before preaching or teaching, *why should they care and what should they to do with this information*. This is a question I consistently ask myself when preparing messages, sermons, lessons, and apologetic videos. After all, if it is merely the

acquisition of knowledge, and nothing more, how will that help a dark world find light? You can have an operable flashlight, along with the knowledge of how to use it, but unless you actually put that knowledge to use, the flashlight is worthless for its intended purpose, to illuminate the darkness. Realize, you have a purpose (Ephesians 2:10), and it is not merely the acquisition of theological knowledge, but it is the purpose of knowing God and making Him known. So how can we fulfill this purpose by understanding the basics of Free Grace Theology?

Applying the Love of God

A major emphasis of Free Grace Theology centers on the love of God for all mankind. This abounding love extends to all people due to His desire for every person to come to a saving knowledge of Him. This means if no one is removed from the love of God, should we not also consider no one removed from our love also? This means even though some people may ridicule or use us, we must remain committed to reflecting God's love toward them. Remember, it was not when we were friends with God when Jesus died for us, but when we were His enemies. Did you or I deserve that love of God? Absolutely not! Did God, in His grace and mercy choose to reveal His love for us still? Amazingly He did. Therefore, we should not withhold our love for others based upon what they say or do to us, but we must remain committed to the idea salvation is but a moment away for those people through faith.

Applying the Grace of God

Free Grace Theology is all about the grace of God extended to man. Have you ever considered the thought if God only gave us what we earned, and it was dependent upon following His rule of law, what would we truly have? Could we honestly say we obeyed Him well enough to receive any of the blessings we have today? What about when we consider it is not only the act of obedience, but it is also the heart of obedience as well; would we still see ourselves worthy of receiving God's blessing? God's grace is so extravagant that He blesses us when we deserve no blessing. He reaches down to us when we have turned our back on Him. He gives us opportunities when we squander previous ones. If God's grace is extended to us in this degree, should we, as Christians not extend the same grace outward, to those around us? Do we only minister to those we believe are worthwhile, worthy, or deserving of our ministration? Should we not minister to those at times who have wronged us, forsaken us, when they come to us with a need? Should we not minister those who we know cannot return the favor to us, simply because we want our faith to be useful to others (James 2:14-26)? Reflecting on the great grace of God should give us the desire to be gracious to others. Especially if we want others to know the extravagant love of God.

Applying the "Whosoever" Principle

Free Grace Theology also understands the Gospel is available to all people, by simple faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross for their sins, not only for the so-called "elect." This means every person we come into contact

with has the opportunity to become a child of God (if not yet already) through faith. When we consider each person has an immortal soul which will spend eternity in one of two places, it places more of an emphasis to reach individuals. One of the knocks against Calvinism is the notion that only the “elect” would be saved. If that is the case, then what is the purpose of evangelism? One Calvinist told me, it is because we are commanded to. To which I replied to him, *you are commanded not to speak foul of other people, yet you do.* Ouch! Another answer from him was the fact *we don’t know who are the elect, so we witness to reach those who are elect.* This statement always seemed funny to me because the same Calvinist that argues God’s supreme sovereignty in one’s salvation needs man to find the elect, otherwise the “elect” which God sovereignly chose for salvation would not get saved. Do we see this enigma? If salvation is solely based upon God’s sovereign election, then why does anyone need to evangelize? And what if all the Calvinists cease evangelizing, will that mean God’s sovereignty will be thwarted because no longer are the “elect” being found? God’s love is so much greater than just for the “elect.” His love is so great so as to be extended to all people. And all people have equal footing to become a child of God, by grace through faith. Free Grace Theology teaches this and therefore it means no one is too far from God’s saving grace, necessitating the Christian’s desire to reach whosoever.

Applying the Need for Discipleship

Free Grace Theology emphasizes the need for discipleship in the life of a believer. As discussed in Chapter 9, the mere fact there are negative commands and a subjunctive mood

addressed to Christians reveals Christians can live contrary to God. A Christian can succumb to the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). A Christian can become a prodigal child of God, with the ability to be restored in a right relationship again (Luke 15:11-32). These accounts and teachings reveal Christians are not perfect, and can still live according to the flesh, as they battle the earthly desires the adversary places in their way. This does not mean that the Christian is not “genuine,” nor does it mean the Christian may lose their eternal life. Rather, this means the Christian needs discipleship or else the Christian will receive divine discipline.

On one extreme, some Arminians see God’s discipline as forsaking the Christian, taking away the gift of salvation. In this view, discipline is a judicial tool for one to incur retribution. On the other extreme, some Calvinists see discipline as evidence one is not a “genuine” believer. Neither sees God’s discipline as a rehabilitative tool, to correct behavior and restore relationship. If that is why earthly parents discipline their children, why would God not discipline the same, only in a perfect measure? Free Grace Theology realizes a Christian must be disciplined otherwise they run the risk of being a lazy, apathetic, ignorant, unprofitable servant of Christ who will see nothing but rebuke at the Judgement Seat of Christ. Granted, they will be saved, but they will not enter into the gates of heaven without shame for their disservice to the One who gave so much for them.

Concluding Thoughts

There are many other ways to apply the tenets of Free Grace Theology to our personal lives. I encourage you to reflect upon each chapter and ask yourself, *how can I apply these principles to my daily life?* In the end, our faith is not meant to be hidden in the closet, but rather it is to be used to reveal the love of God to a world that needs to know God. And a useful faith is one which blesses others in need (James 2:14-26) in order to reveal the love of God.

Chapter 10:

Key Take-Aways

- Knowledge of theology is useless by itself; it must be applied.
- You must ask yourself, *why does this matter? Why should anyone care?*
- Understanding that God loves all mankind reveals that the Christian should strive to love all so that whosoever may consider, and respond, to the Gospel message.
- How much more ministering would the church do if the church truly applied the grace of God to people who were thought undeserving or unworthy?
- If whosoever can volitionally respond to the Gospel message, then the Christian has the responsibility to reach them.
- Christians are to actively live their faith, not keep it in the closet (James 2:14-26).
- The Christian does not do good deeds for recognition, but rather so a lost and dying world can see the glory of the Father (Matthew 5:16).

Conclusion

The Whole of the Matter

Tying it All Together

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.
(Ecclesiastes 12:13)*

I had a burden to write this book for two main reasons. First, to reveal the False Dichotomy present. During election time in America, the main parties are Democrat or Republican however, those are not the only parties available for one to follow or for which to vote. And in the same vein, one does not need to be either an Arminian or a Calvinist. Those are merely two theological lenses from which Scripture is viewed. But therein lies the problem, many people place their Arminian or Calvinist glasses on and then begin reading the Bible. What needs to be done is to read the Bible without these glasses. Or at least the very least, realize we all carry our own presuppositions when reading the Bible, and fight to prevent our presuppositions to find their way onto the pages of God's word. Instead, we should come to the Bible and allow the Word of God to interpret itself; and it does so in many places (see my book *Investigating Lordship Salvation: A Free Grace Response to a Works-Based Salvation*).

The second main reason for the writing of this book was not necessarily to respond to the caricatures of Free Grace Theology, but to simply state its basic beliefs. While the teachings of Free Grace Theology are, oftentimes, given a caricature which is equivalent to a Strawman, many seem to not take the time to sit down and understand the Free Grace position. Partly this is due to the fact some of the teachings in this book fly in the face of one's emotional and philosophical ideas of Scripture. As mentioned elsewhere in this book, some people are noble in their effort to ensure salvation is wholly dependent upon God, removing any possible way man may take credit for an eternal salvation which is given by grace alone. However, in that endeavor, these individuals minimize the love of God by unwittingly expressing He only loves the "elect." This minimizing of God's love negates His love for the world (John 3:16) and places it only upon the "elect." This is no small shift by theologians. It is an attempt to shut people off from the love of God, the very people Jesus died to save. God did not limit His love to a minority group called the "elect" who were chosen in eternity past. We too should not limit our love to a selection of those made in God's image.

Some also neglect clear commands of Jesus Christ for an individual to "believe" in the Gospel message, as it is taught God must regenerate an individual before they can be saved. However, if one must be regenerated before they are able to receive the gift of salvation, then the call of Jesus for people to "believe" in Him are insincere. Insincere because He would have known that most of those people, such as many of the religious leaders of His day, were not going to be regenerated first, thereby making His command for them to

“believe” something they actually could never do. Therefore, in this view, their lack of salvation falls upon the shoulders of God and not upon the shoulders of man, for those individuals never had the ability to even consider receiving the gift of salvation.

Free Grace Theology rejects these notions and understands God’s love is so great that it is extended to all people, and that whosoever “believes” may be saved, not only the “elect.” Therefore, this book gave a sketch of various teachings within Free Grace, to clear up its misrepresentation. An explanation of the meaning of “free” was provided in Chapter 1. The world’s most popular verse, John 3:16, was shown how someone may receive the gift of eternal life in Chapter 2. Illustrated through birth, adoption, and marriage, we see how one’s salvation is dependent upon the power, process, and promise of God, in Chapter 3. Then we considered if salvation is of God, then our maintenance needs to be as well, in Chapter 4, Eternal Security. From becoming a Christian, Chapter 5 succinctly revealed Jesus commands the believer to seek rewards for an obedient life to God’s command. Understanding a Christian can go wayward and be ensnared in sin, Chapter 6 explains how God’s discipline seeks to rehabilitate the Christian. Understanding the purpose of discipline, we then consider that prodigal Christian’s do not need to be re-saved, but rather they need to be disciplined, in Chapter 7. Then in Chapter 8, we considered how one’s salvation is utterly dependent upon the character of God. While in Chapter 9, it is wondered if a Christian must persevere in good works, and always bear good fruit, then why all the negative commands?

Finally, we put all the teachings of Free Grace Theology together and see how it fits in our practical, everyday life of

seeking to minister to those in our realm of influence.

As mentioned in the Introduction of this book, I pray this sketch of Free Grace Theology corrects the caricature that some draw. I pray this book encourages the Christian in their walk with Christ, that if you find yourself walking away, that you see God's rehabilitative efforts to bring your back in fellowship. I also pray for the Christian to maintain encouragement that salvation is utterly dependent upon the power and promise of God and that we need not work to prove ourselves worthy, because none of us are worthy to have or maintain eternal life. Finally, I pray this book will lead those seeking the truth of religion and salvation, to find the Savior who loves them and died for them, even while they are enemies of God.

Scripture Index

Genesis 2:24	30
Genesis 6:1-4	97
Genesis 15:6	12, 15,16
Genesis 49:10	92
Exodus 19:6	92
Numbers 21:5-9	22
Numbers 23:19	32
Deuteronomy 7:6	92
Deuteronomy 14:2	92
Psalms 50:6	89
Psalms 119:67	67
Psalms 119:71	67
Psalms 119:75	67
Psalms 125:4	92
Isaiah 9:6	92
Isaiah 30:18	89
Isaiah 44:1	92
Isaiah 46:10	86
Lamentations 3:22	91, 92
Malachi 2:17	89
Matthew 2:16-18	97
Matthew 4:1-11	97
Matthew 5:16	115
Matthew 6:19-20	49
Matthew 6:20	52
Matthew 13:8-23	27
Matthew 19:27-28	56
Matthew 24:3	51
Matthew 25:14-30	49
Matthew 25:41	95

Matthew 28:17	105
Matthew 28:19	105
Matthew 28:19-20	75, 81
Luke 6:36	86
Luke 9:23	75
Luke 15:11-32	113
John 1:12	96, 103
John 1:12-13	15, 16
John 3:4	26
John 3:5	27
John 3:14	22
John 3:15	38
John 3:16	17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 26, 38, 90 94, 96, 117, 118
John 3:36	39
John 5:18	97
John 5:24	15, 16, 39
John 6:37	96
John 6:40	15, 16, 36, 39
John 6:47	39
John 8:59	97
John 10:28	36
John 10:31	97
John 11:25-27	15, 16
John 14:1-4	52
John 14:16-17	41
John 15:1-11	21
John 15:13	90
Acts 5:1-10	69
Acts 17:11	4
Romans 3:20	64
Romans 3:24	35, 64
Romans 3:24-25	15, 16
Romans 3:28	64
Romans 4:2	93

Romans 4:3	93
Romans 4:4	93
Romans 4:4-5	11, 12
Romans 4:5	93
Romans 5:1	15, 16
Romans 5:3-5	74
Romans 5:8	90
Romans 6:23	32, 35
Romans 11:30-32	92
1 Corinthians 3:12	52
1 Corinthians 3:12-15	57
1 Corinthians 9:24-25	53
1 Corinthians 11:2	29
1 Corinthians 11:28-30	69
1 Corinthians 15:53-54	23
2 Corinthians 1:21-22	42
2 Corinthians 1:22	43
2 Corinthians 3:11-15	70
2 Corinthians 4:17	74
2 Corinthians 5:9-10	69
2 Corinthians 5:10	57
2 Corinthians 13:5	68, 107
Galatians 2:16	64
Galatians 3:2	15, 16
Galatians 3:2-3	38
Galatians 4:4	29
Galatians 6:1	80
Galatians 6:2-6	82
Ephesians 1:1	103
Ephesians 1:5	28
Ephesians 1:3-14	28, 96
Ephesians 1:13	42

Ephesians 1:14	43, 45
Ephesians 2:8-9	15, 16, 93
Ephesians 4:17-32	102
Ephesians 4:30	42, 45
Philippians 3:8	3
1 Thessalonians 2:19	54
1 Timothy 1:16	15, 16
1 Timothy 2:3-4	96
2 Timothy 2:11-12	56
2 Timothy 2:19	44
2 Timothy 4:7	45
2 Timothy 4:8	54
Titus 1:2	32
Titus 2:11	86
Titus 3:5-8	15, 16
Hebrews 6:18	32
Hebrews 10:26-27	65
Hebrews 12:1	36
Hebrews 12:6-8	66
James 1:2-4	74
James 1:12	55
James 1:17	32
James 2:14-26	111, 114, 115
1 Peter 1:6-7	75
1 Peter 1:16	86
1 Peter 1:20	96, 97
1 Peter 1:23	26, 27
1 Peter 5:4	55
2 Peter 3:9	95
1 John 2:1	41
1 John 2:2	20

1 John 2:16	113
1 John 3:15	61
1 John 4:8	20, 86
1 John 4:9-10	90
1 John 5:13	37
1 John 5:16	69
Revelation 20:14	95
Revelation 21:8	23

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