

Is the Free Grace Position Really Free?

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The message and reception of God's grace and salvation into one's life is based upon God's favor and kindness – not man's works or legalism (Eph. 2:8-9). In the words of the late Charles Ryrie, "It's absolutely free!" This means that salvation is received as a free gift based upon the expression of God's grace alone (Rom. 6:23). Grace is God's unmerited and undeserved favor expressed to lost mankind which means every Gospel believer is justified and therefore saved by free grace (without human works).

Romans 3:24

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Free! Anyone who embraces the message of free grace, including myself, rejoices in the offer of God's free grace to lost sinners which results in salvation (Rom. 6:23; 8:32; 1 Cor. 2:12; Rev. 21:6; 22:17). We sing: "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling." In other words, we bring nothing to the table when it comes to our salvation.

Isaiah 55:1

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

This means we don't bargain or barter with God by presenting Him with our good works, our promises to become Christ's disciple, make Jesus Lord over our lives, count the cost of being a Christian, and that we will give up all of our sins and follow Christ the rest of our days on earth. Grace is freely offered and received for we are to "take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). We don't enter into a contract with God in order to receive grace and salvation. We are not asked to

sign on the dotted line knowing there is fine print in the contract that we must adhere to or else!

“Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me.
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee
Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I come.”

I am a strong proponent of free grace salvation. It is absolutely free! A person must just “come” to Christ (Rev. 22:17), expressing faith in His sacrificial provision, come without price, promises, or performance and they will be saved by God’s amazing grace. Jesus taught that “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). At the same time, I’m opposed to only emphasizing free grace for salvation while forgetting about the freedom that grace brings into a person’s life after salvation. The Scripture teaches that grace is both saving and sanctifying in nature.

Titus 2:11 -12 declares:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men (SAVING GRACE - *the freedom of grace related to salvation*), Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (SANCITIFYING GRACE - *the freedom of grace related to living the Christian life*).

There is definitely a freedom to experience when receiving grace into one’s life at the time of salvation but there is also a freedom to experience when a person repents of his sin and begins to experience a newfound liberty from sin in his Christian walk. Saving grace (Eph. 2:8-9) should not be mixed with sanctifying grace (Eph. 2:10) at the time of one’s salvation but the grace of transformation is not something that is totally absent in a Christian’s life. It is this second aspect of free grace that is often overlooked in the Free Grace Movement because their teaching attempts to counter the unbiblical conclusions of Lordship Salvation which essentially steals free grace from a person’s salvation experience by mixing *saving* grace with *sanctifying* grace which becomes necessary for one’s salvation.

In this study I want to confirm from Scripture that the free grace that saves is also the same grace that provides freedom from sin’s power and transformation for every Gospel believer. I’m amazed when those who identify as “free gracers” will

try and refute the most obvious meanings of some Bible texts that teach repentance for salvation and transformation of living as proof of one's salvation for every born again child of God (Luke 24:47; Acts 26:20; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 3:9-10, 14; 5:18-20; John 15:1-6).

Free Grace Theology teaches that if the transforming nature of grace is emphasized as being part of believer's lives to authenticate their salvation (James 2:17, 20, 26), then Christians will become trapped in a works/salvation scenario and doubt their salvation. This is because they could never know how many good works it takes to make sure their faith and salvation was genuine at the time of their salvation. But none of the Biblical texts teach that repentance is a form of a works/salvation or that observing how God has changed a person's life will result in that person doubting his salvation. When correctly, Biblically, and exegetically understood, the texts on the transforming nature of grace do not inject a system of works and doubt in relation to one's salvation.

The concern of some who embrace free grace is that grace cannot be freely received if a person must repent since they identify repentance as a form of works which involves forsaking or giving up sins and trying to reform one's life. However, the free gracers have erected a strawman argument by redefining Biblical repentance, which is essentially a change of mind and



heart, and they have turned it into a form of works (legalism). After misrepresenting repentance as performing good works, they then knock down the argument they have erected by using other texts of Scripture that support salvation is not by works.

The Bible reveals that it is repentance which prepares an unsaved person to receive God's saving grace (Acts 11:18; Rom. 2:4) and transformation of living is the result of God's sanctifying work of grace occurring in the believer's life (Rom. 6:1-15; Titus 2:11-12), none of which involves legalism. When grace is at work legalism cannot be at work (Rom. 11:6). The free grace that saves also produces freedom from the bondage of sin. It does not keep a person in the pigpen of his old way of life, permanently bound to sin, unbelief, and committed to apostasy (2 Pet. 2:22).



Here is where some of the Free Grace Theology goes off the rails. If a person can deny the truth of the Gospel, live as an apostate, live like the devil and be labeled a child of the devil (1 John 3:10), and still be saved, as some Free Grace Theology assumes, then this is actually a distortion of free grace. This is because

grace is not only freely received (without works) for salvation (Eph. 2:8-9) but the work of sanctifying grace occurring in a person's life also frees or liberates an individual from his former living and belief systems which run contrary to Biblical truth. Free grace not only saves but sanctifies (Rom. 6:14-15) in its outworking within the believer's life. Its freedom is experienced in both salvation and sanctification.

It also must be understood that repentance does not take the offer of free grace off the table. The Bible says the unbelievers "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). The "turning" was inward (in the heart) and was part of their conversion response so they could be released and freed from enslavement to sin. How can poor lost sinners experience true spiritual freedom from unbelief and sin if they do not repent of their unbelief, legalism (works), their sinful rebellion against God, and embrace the liberating message of the Gospel, grace, and new life in Christ? The grace of salvation is a delivering grace not only from hell but from the power and enslavement of sin.

Free gracers shoot themselves in the foot many times by pushing "free grace" to the outer limits and creating a radical disconnect from the teaching of Biblical repentance in relation to salvation and sanctification. This is because they do not see repentance as necessary for salvation and transformation as necessary in confirming a person's salvation. But the message of the Gospel and grace reminds us that we can be free from sin's penalty and power through Christ alone (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 1:4; Titus 2:11-12; Heb. 2:15). However, if a person does not repent and rejects this message of grace and freedom



by choosing darkness over light (John 3:19), rejecting the claims of Jesus Christ (John 5:40), not recognizing he is a sinner and needs a Savior (Rom. 3:10-12, 23), that salvation is by faith without works (Rom. 3:20), and if he wants to live in open rebellion against God, deny the faith like an apostate (2 Peter 2), then he cannot experience grace and freedom. He has mocked the precious pearl of grace (Matt. 7:6) and missed the freedom that grace is designed to bring in the life of a true Gospel believer.

2 Peter 2:19

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”

The Bible clearly teaches that living as an apostate is not freedom but bondage (2 Pet. 2:14-20) and that apostates distort the true meaning of grace (Jude 4). Scripture always distinguishes Christians from apostates (1 John 2:19; Heb. 6:9; 10:39) who do not possess the Holy Spirit (Jude 19; Rom. 8:9), who deny Christ (2 Pet. 2:1), and who are repeatedly described as going to hell (2 Pet. 2:1, 3, 12, 17; Jude 12-13). These are not descriptions of Christians! We must allow the language of Scripture to speak for itself and not superimpose our belief systems upon it. To teach that Christians can live under the guise of apostasy, total abandonment of God, and still be saved is fictional – not Biblical.

Hebrews 10:39 concludes:

“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Harry Ironside once wrote:

"It is important to realize that there is a vast difference between spiritual declension (backsliding) and apostasy."

To accept the free offer that grace extends to us for salvation but reject the freedom that grace wants to bring into our lives distorts the meaning of free grace. How can we truly be free if we reject the message of freedom that Jesus taught?

John 8:32

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 8:36

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

If “free grace” means I don’t need to repent or possess a general desire to be freed or released from the power of sin and the very penalty of sin (hell), if I don’t need to be delivered from my pseudo belief systems (Islam, Atheism, Mormonism, etc.), if I don’t need to continue to believe in the Gospel after I am saved, or if I can become an apostate and live my Christian life as a “hell raiser” for the rest of my life on earth and still be saved, then we have no freedom! How can we be liberated if we reject the message of liberty? How can we be freed by grace if we live a life of constant rebellion against the One who died to free us?

Grace is freely offered to us at the time of our conversion (Rom. 3:24), but if we are not willing to repent, then we are not ready to receive grace and cannot be saved (Luke 13:3, 5; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 9:20-21; 16:11). Grace is also to be a life-transforming reality in our Christian life (Romans 6:1-14), but if we fail to tap into grace and our life never changes, showing no signs or evidences of regeneration, then the Bible states we cannot be one of God’s children (1 John 3:8, 10; John 8:44; Eph. 2:1-3) but instead are an illegitimate child (Heb. 12:6-8).

To be truly freed by God’s amazing grace, we must personally embrace the message of freedom from sin’s penalty and power which begins through Biblical repentance and faith, or as the Scripture teaches: “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Repentance gets a person to “faith alone” in Christ for a person must repent of his works/legalism belief system before he can express faith alone in Christ.



But more than this, an individual must also repent of his sin before God (acknowledging he is a sinner) and with repentance he will possess a sorrow over his sin and desire to be released from its power and bondage (Matt. 21:29). An inward desire to “turn to God from idols” (1 Thess. 1:9) and no longer live in rebellion against God is naturally built into repentance. This is why you don’t need

to turn repentance into legalism (something that it is not) by telling a person he must give up all his sins, reform his life, become a disciple or follower of Christ, count the cost, and surrender the rest of his life to God in order to be saved.

FREE GRACE?

Think of it this way. To conclude that a genuine Christian can live in total rebellion against God and depart from the basic tenants of Biblical truth, or the Christian

faith (Jude 3), and even deny his faith in Christ and still be saved, would mean there is no more freedom left in grace! If a person can come to Jesus Christ without repentance, refusing to admit that he is a sinner and reject God's call to repentance from sin's stronghold over his life (Luke 5:32), then how can he be free from sin (Rom. 6:20, 22; 8:2)? If a person can live in open rebellion against God, walk away from faith alone in Christ for his salvation, become an apostate, atheist, or Satanist, while all the time being saved as some free-gracers claim, then what freedom is left in grace?

Those who teach this radical form of free grace are opening the door for "sham" or counterfeit conversions. They are also committing "voodoo exegesis" on various Bible texts that clearly teach repentance for salvation and a sanctifying change that occurs in the life of a genuine believer (Eph. 2:10; 1 John 2:17, 29; 3:7; 5:18), a change that is rooted in the sanctifying work of grace which frees a person from enslavement to sin (Rom. 6:1-14; Titus 2:11-12).

Romans 6:20 says:

"For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness."

Romans 6:22 adds:

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

In an attempt to counter the extreme forms of Reformed Theology and the teaching of Lordship Salvation, many free-gracers have created their own extreme form of Grace Theology which is an aberrant teaching that cannot be supported from the Bible. It is not "Grace in Focus" as many claim but grace out of focus. It is grace gone wild! That a person can live in total apostasy, deny the faith, live like

the devil, become a Satanic priest, and never change his life after becoming a Christian and still go to Heaven when he dies is anti-Scriptural.

1 John 3:10 says:

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness (as a way or pattern of life, possessing no change in his life and conduct) is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (possessing a disinterest in God’s people, wanting nothing to do with them).

A child of the devil cannot be anything else but a child of the devil! John is teaching that when a person practices, as a pattern of life, rebellion, unrighteous living, and wants nothing to do with God’s people and Christianity (1 John 2:19), then he cannot be saved. He may be a *professor* but not a *possessor* of salvation.

Jesus echoes the same truth in John 8:44:

“Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

James 2:17 also confirms:

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

James 2:26 repeats the same truth:

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

The old saying is true:

“Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone.”

Although many free-gracers misinterpret the obvious meaning of the above texts, the Bible means what it says.

James 2:19

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

Demons possess a type of faith in God (monotheism) that does not save them, and this is obvious because demons have no desire to live for God and prove their

faith in God is the real thing. The same is true regarding those who claim to have expressed faith in Christ but live like demons, possessing no desire to live for God and serve Him.

God's people do not live a totally barren and unfruitful life. Yes, there might be times when they pass through a dry season in their Christian experience (2 Pet. 1:8) but eventually the desert will bloom and there will be signs of regenerating life identified as "fruit, "more fruit," and "much fruit" (John 15:2, 8) and "fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold" (Matt. 13:8). Jesus taught that all Christians would manifest varying amounts of fruit or transformation in their living (John 15:1-6). Life begets life. If a person does not manifest any change in his life, then his faith is spurious or not genuine and he is a child of the devil. Jesus said it, not me!

Don Anderson said:

"Faith without life-evidence is like an apple tree without apples, a car without wheels, a watch that doesn't run. True faith, like a living tree, will reveal its life by the kind of fruit that it produces."

Works FOLLOW faith (Eph. 2:10) but they are not PART of faith, when a person trusts in Christ to be his Savior (Eph. 2:8-9). However, if we have been justified before God by faith (James 2:23), then our justification before God will be confirmed by good works or transformation of living (James 2:24). Our belief in Christ will eventually translate into behavior that is like Christ or else we are a counterfeit Christian (1 John 2:3-4, 17; 3:8-10, 14-15; 4:7-8; 5:18).

Jesus taught that "Ye shall know them by their fruit" (Matt. 7:16) and "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). A life lived without any regenerating signs of life (fruit of righteous living) is proof that a person does not possess authentic or real saving faith in Christ.

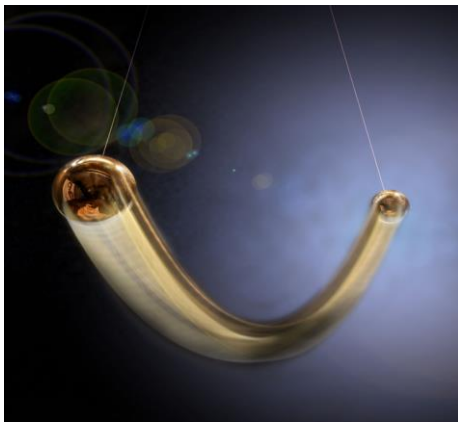
Anderson concludes:

"Salvation does bring change, maybe slowly, maybe imperceptibly at times, but authentic trust will somehow manifest itself in good works and a different lifestyle. ... Good works are the proof in the pudding."

The problem with Lordship Salvation teaching is that it mixes *sanctifying* grace with *saving* grace at the time of conversion and the problem with the Free Grace

Theology is that *sanctifying* grace does not have to follow *saving* grace. But the Bible tells a difference story (Romans 6; Titus 2:11-12; Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:26; 1 John 3:10). Of course, our primary assurance is not based upon our transformation or perseverance (John 3:15-16; 1 John 5:13) but at the same time our new life in Christ provides us with a secondary confirmation of our salvation (2 Pet. 1:10). It tells the story that God has begun a good work in us and will continue to do so (Phil. 1:6). This brings added encouragement to our hearts.

The Biblical truth needs to be maintained that “faith alone” (in Christ) saves a person (Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 3:26) but as the same time “faith alone” (without works) in a person’s life indicates he cannot be saved (James 2:17-19). Saving grace brings a person into a right relationship with God but sanctifying grace confirms this relationship. These two truths need to be properly balanced as we study the Scriptures. It’s often been said:



“The pendulum swings,
Ridiculous extreme,
Bypassing the truth
Which lieth between.”

God’s grace does freely justify and redeem us (Rom. 3:24) and repentance which is a change of mind and heart attitude about God, Christ, sin, our rebellion against God, and need for salvation does not take away from the glorious message of “free grace.” It actually results in freedom! Repentance opens the door for the Gospel believer to experience the freedom that grace brings into a person’s life (1 Cor. 7:22).

How can the freedom of grace be experienced without a person repenting of his sin and rebellion against God and desiring to be released from his slavery to sin (Rev. 16:11)? How can a person be free without repenting of his legalism or the human effort to be justified before God (Gal. 5:1)? How can a person experience the true freedom that grace can bring while possessing a warped worldview of God and Jesus Christ (Heb. 11:6)? How can a person be freed from Satanic

strongholds without repenting and experiencing the liberation that grace brings into a person's life (Rev. 9:20)? Here is the point. No person can be saved without repentance and therefore cannot experience the freedom that grace promises. Jesus taught, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). I'm sticking with what Jesus says!

Sinners cannot get to "faith alone in Christ alone" until they repent of their former belief systems that may be related to a works/legalistic/salvation which separates them from God (Heb. 6:1). Sinners cannot get to "faith alone in Christ" until they repent of their pluralism (there are many ways to God) or their atheism (there is no God). After all, Jesus said that He was the only way to Heaven (John 14:6). If a sinner cannot get passed the basic truth that he is a sinner in need of the Savior Jesus Christ, then he has not repented and cannot express genuine faith in Christ.



Yes, it's true. Just stop and think about it. Lost sinners cannot express "faith alone in Christ" unless they repent (change their thinking and heart) and accept the fact that they are dreadful sinners that have transgressed against God (Rom. 3:23; Luke 15:10), that their good works cannot save them (Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:5), and that they need Christ as Savior (Acts 16:31). A sinner cannot be saved "by grace alone through faith alone" and experience the freedom that grace brings unless they actually desire Christ's forgiveness, pardon, and freedom from their acts of rebellion against God (Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Acts 17:30). In fact, no person would have any desire to be saved "by grace through faith alone" without repenting or changing his thinking and heart regarding his sin, salvation, and need for the Savior. Repentance prepares the heart to receive grace and salvation through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Harry Ironside remarked:

"Repentance is not opposed to grace; it is the recognition of the need of grace."

Unsaved people cannot and will not express genuine faith in Christ (John 5:40) unless they repent about following another Jesus, another gospel (2 Cor. 11:4), a works-based religion, their Atheism, Pantheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or their general rebellion against God (Acts 17:30). Repentance is changing one's inward

belief system. It's a reversal of one's thinking regarding sin, the Savior, and need of salvation which brings people to the place where they can place "faith alone in Christ alone." Both Jesus and the apostles knew this as they presented the message of repentance and faith in Christ's person and work (Luke 24:47; Acts 20:21).

In Acts 26:18, Paul declared that he shared the Gospel with the Gentiles: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Now this is repentance! A person is not ready to express "faith alone in Christ" until they receive the light of God's revelation and are ready to be saved by turning away from the darkness of sin, Satan, and the realm of unbelief.



Jesus taught in Luke 4:18 that He came "to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." True liberty and freedom is the desire to be released from the power of sin that once kept a person in bondage and slavery.

Charles Wesley wrote:

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light
My chains fell off, my heart was free
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

Any response that lacks repentance (Matt. 13:6) does not bring this freedom into a person's life. Hence, it is not a message of genuine "free grace" for it keeps a person bound to their sins and former lifestyle. Grace sets people free from their sins by transforming their lives (Titus 2:11-12). It does not keep them bound to sin and never changes their lives. The offer of saving grace is free and the result of

sanctifying grace produces a newfound freedom or liberty in the lives of people who are born again with a new nature and new way of life “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 declares:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”



**AND SUCH WERE
SOME OF YOU**

“And such were some of you.” This speaks of the transformation that occurs after salvation. Some Free Grace Theology tries to dance around the obvious teaching of this and other similar texts (Gal. 5:21). But the reason these unsaved people will not inherit (enter) the kingdom is because

they are sinners! Yes, unbelieving sinners but still sinners. Immediately after speaking of their sinful lives, Paul declares to the Corinthian believers – “And such were some of you.” This expression would obviously include a transformation from their previous sinful acts of rebellion and degradation which were just mentioned as being part of their former lifestyles.

To overlook this is to miss the obvious intent of Paul’s teaching. A person’s position in Christ (“but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified”) frees them from the way they used to live as a sinner who was continually bound and enslaved to sin (John 8:31-32, 36; Romans 6:1-14). Grace results in freedom (Titus 2:11-12) and not a continual life of habitual enslavement to sin without Christ’s delivering power. The pattern of sinfulness in the lives of unsaved people does serve as proof of their unbelief and lack of repentance (Gal. 5:21; Rev. 16:9, 11) whereas the transformation in the lives of those who are saved (regenerated) results in a new way of life (“such were some of you”).

The newly acquired position in Christ results in a new practice of living. The position presumes the practice (1 John 2:13-14). We are blessed with all the

spiritual blessings in the heavenlies through our positional standing in Christ (Eph. 1:3) but out of this flows transformation or “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4) and “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4). This is what Paul is bringing out in the 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Galatians 5:21 texts. You were once like this, enslaved to sin, but your new position has changed your way of living so that you no longer live in continual bondage to sin without God’s life, nature, likeness, and fruit being produced in your life.



Free gracers are constantly worried that Christians will lack the assurance of their salvation if they must repent and look at their good works to obtain assurance. But this conclusion does not accurately reflect Biblical teaching. Let me explain.

First, faith is not bound to works in the sinner’s conversion experience – it is diametrically opposed to works (Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 11:6). This means faith is only one thing – trust or reliance on Christ as Savior.

Second, we are called upon to look to Christ for the assurance that we possess eternal life (John 3:14-18). We are to believe in the promise that Jesus gave to us (John 6:47; 1 John 5:11-13). Essentially, we believe on Christ for everlasting life and in maintaining this belief in Christ we will not doubt our salvation. Assurance is based upon our Gospel belief when “we first trusted Christ” (Eph. 1:12) and the promise of eternal life (Rom. 6:23) that comes through Christ’s death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Third, repentance is essentially a change of mind regarding one’s previous belief system(s) that keeps a person from expressing faith in Christ and consists of a general desire to be freed from sin’s penalty (Rom. 2:4-5) and power (Luke 15:7; 24:47). The best thing we can do is get out of the way and let sinners repent! Repentance is not a form of works. In repentance, God does not ask us to *do*

something, *become* something, or *promise* something (the Lordship Salvation position) in order to be saved. He does not ask us to count the cost of being a disciple and follow Jesus the rest of our life. He simply asks us to repent.

It's important to understand that *repenting* before God and *pledging* something to God for salvation are two different things. I do not have to cooperate with Christ's program of discipleship, make a contract with God, which involves obeying the commands of Jesus, giving up all my sins, and making a commitment to Christ's lordship as a necessary condition of eternal life. This is *frontloading* the Gospel with works. Nor do I have to base my assurance of salvation on my performance instead of my faith in Christ (this is *backloading* the Gospel with works).

Fourth, the ROOT of repentance is a changed mind and heart about sin, the need for the Savior, and salvation. But the FRUIT of repentance is transformation of living. Let's reflect on this for a few moments. Acts 26:20 declares that Paul "shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God (*the*



ROOT of repentance – an inward desire and willingness to turn away from unbelief and sin), and do works meet for repentance (*the FRUIT of repentance which comes after salvation*).

As Jesus taught, a saved person was to "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). Free gracers never seem to separate these two aspects of repentance, the ROOT and the FRUIT, or the ROOT and the RESULT of repentance. Instead, they argue for a "no repentance" conversion of a sinner since they wrongly associate repentance with Lordship Salvation, legalism, and works. But Biblical repentance is none of these things.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 again declares, "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols (*the ROOT*

of repentance - an inward turning away from former belief systems and a desire to be freed from one's sins – this is conversion) to serve the living and true God (the FRUIT of repentance that comes after salvation). In summary, works have nothing to do with the actual conversion experience. The ROOT of repentance is the change of mind that occurs at conversion, while the FRUIT of repentance is what occurs after one is saved and becomes a confirmation of his salvation (Eph. 2:10; Matt. 13:8).

Charles Spurgeon wrote about the fruit of repentance:

“If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of, and his conversion is a fiction.”

In other words, if the FRUIT does not grow out of the ROOT of repentance, it's because there is no root! This means a person has never changed his mind and heart regarding his sin of unbelief and sinful rebellion against God and expressed faith in Christ.



Despite what the Free Grace Movement is teaching today, everyone who comes to genuine faith in Christ has already repented of their sins and of anything that has become a barrier which has kept them from expressing faith in Christ. Repentance paves the way for faith to occur. One free-gracer told me that he used to believe in the “change of mind” view of repentance but he no longer does. I told him he should “change his mind” about the “the change of mind” teaching of Scripture and once again embrace it for this is how sinners are saved.

Now reflect on this. This particular free-gracer is essentially concluding that unsaved people must no longer change their thinking and heart about their atheism, Satanic worship, child molestation, or Hinduism if they want to be saved. They don't have to repent over their atheistic, Satanic, and occult practices while embracing Jesus Christ. Of course, this is an absurdity for the simple reason that a Satanist will never express faith in Christ for salvation for he has chosen to worship Satan (James 2:19), a Hindu wants to worship multiple gods (Acts 19:26), and an atheist does not believe in any gods (Ps. 14:1). How could they possibly be saved without repentance? The simple answer is people are not saved without

repenting for God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9) and this is why “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4).

Repentance does not override the message of free grace (Rom. 3:24). Biblical repentance brings a person to the place where he realizes his need for grace. Repentance is the recognition that a person is a sinner, that Jesus is the only way to Heaven, and that, as a condemned sinner, he is on a broad road that leads to hell (Matthew 7:13-14). As it relates to salvation and conversion, faith and works are contrasted to one another (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:28; Titus 3:5). Likewise, repentance which is simply the recognition of a person’s sinfulness before God, the desire for pardon and release from the power of sin and Satan, is not a legalistic work any more than faith is a work. In essence, repentance and faith work synergistically together in bringing a person to Christ (Acts 20:21). They complement one another and are the response of a sinner coming to Christ for salvation. Repentance brings a person to accept God’s free grace and salvation.

Free gracers, you don’t have to worry! The Bible teaches I can have *complete assurance* that I am saved apart from my works (Eph. 2:8-9; John 3:14-18; 6:47; 1 John 5:13; Isa. 45:22). At the same time, the Scriptures also teach I can possess a *secondary confirmation* that I am saved by the way God has been changing or transforming my life (John 15:1-8; James 2:17, 20, 26; 1 John 3:7-10; 5:18-20; 2 Pet. 1:10) and as I continue to embrace the basic truths related to Christ and my salvation (Heb. 3:6, 14; 10:38-39; 1 John 4:15; 5:1; 2 Cor. 13:5).

**Assurance
of Salvation**



Scriptures never divert us from the cross as the central point and focus of assurance (John 3:14-16; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:13; Gal. 6:14; Heb. 12:2). Where we look brings us assurance – not what we do. The basis of our assurance is always rooted in the finished work of Christ and the promise of eternal life (John 6:47; 1 John 5:10-12) - not our performance or the way we live. At the same time, a general self-examination or overall snapshot of

one's life is presented in Scripture as a secondary road marker that God gives to reassure us that we are His children (2 Pet. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 3:8-10). As I take a general look or sweeping glance of my life as a Christian, I can come to this conclusion: "I know I'm not always what God wants me to be, but I thank God that I'm not what I used to be! God is making something beautiful out of my life." The children's song brings out this simple truth.

"He's still working on me
To make me what I need to be.
It took him just a week to make the moon and stars
The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars.
How loving and patient He must be
'Cause He's still workin' on me."

I think many free gracers have thrown the baby out with the bathwater! How can the offer of grace at the time of one's salvation (Titus 2:11; 2 Tim. 1:9) and the transformation that grace brings which follows a person's salvation (Titus 2:12; Rom. 6) be considered "free" (Rom. 6:22) if it keeps people bound to their former sins and belief systems which once separated them from God? This is why repentance is a necessary prerequisite and compliment to saving faith in Christ.



It should be noted that this extreme free grace position of "no repentance" and "no transformation" has never been historically embraced by traditional dispensationalism. George Zeller is correct when concluding that it is "a distorted mutation of what true dispensationalists taught and believed."

Repentance and faith are like the heads and tails on a coin (Acts 20:21). They cannot be separated in respect to the sinner's response to God in salvation. Whenever the Bible speaks of faith in Christ, it cannot be absent from repentance, or else that person would never get "to faith alone in Christ alone" for his or her salvation. Whenever the Bible speaks of repenting in relation to salvation (Luke

13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; Rom. 2:5; 2 Pet. 3:9) it reminds us that repentance is a necessary part of conversion (“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” - Acts 3:19). Repentance opens the door for the sinner to be able to place trust or faith in Christ as his personal Savior.

So, let’s embrace the Biblical truth that both heads and tails (repentance and faith) are part of the sinner’s conversion response to God. Even John’s Gospel, which speaks of belief in the Son of God, and which free



gracers so avidly point to in order to confirm their position of no repentance, teaches that men reject coming to Jesus on the basis of an unrepentant heart for “men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

Yes, we are justified freely by God’s grace alone (Rom. 3:24), in Christ alone, by faith alone (John 3:16, Gal. 3:26). But here is the flip side. We must also desire to be freed from our warped belief systems and wretched acts of rebellion against God or we will not desire to come to Christ by grace alone through faith alone (John 3:19; 5:40; 2 Pet. 3:9). Repentance will always coincide with a genuine expression of faith in Christ. There will be a change of mind and heart regarding a person’s rebellious ways and ideas which run contrary to God’s revelation of his own sinfulness (Rom. 3:23) and need for salvation through Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4:12).

A lost sinner cannot be saved if he wants to merely “try Jesus” while at the same time believe in Reincarnation or Karma. People cannot be saved if they still embrace the delusion that there are many pathways to Heaven (John 14:6). The sinner will not say, “Jesus, I’m coming to you on my own terms. I’m not such a bad person after all. I’ve done many good things throughout my lifetime. This whole idea that ‘there is none righteous;’ well, I just can’t accept it. It won’t fly with me. And surely, I’m not as bad as an Adolph Hitler or Osama bin Laden.”

The Bible teaches that a person must repent of his pagan philosophies and rebellion against God before he can understand the Biblical concept and need for grace and eternal life (John 6:47) and before he can commit his faith alone to

Christ for salvation (2 Tim. 1:12). No, we cannot be truly free from sin and unbelief without wanting freedom and experiencing it through the saving and life-transforming grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:10; Titus 2:11-12). The freedom of grace is not only experienced at the time of one's salvation but also in the life of sanctification. The nature of free grace is not only that it offers salvation as a free gift (Rom. 5:15, 17; Eph. 2:8) but it also makes the Gospel believer free in his Christian experience from his former sinful way of living (1 Pet. 4:4).



Some of the Free Grace Theology being promoted today makes grace one-sided in that it only *saves* a person, but it does not *change* a person. Yes, grace is free. It is free to receive at the time of salvation, but it also frees us from what we used to be before we were saved. This is because grace has made us into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). We are not the same old creature!

In conclusion, free grace teaching seeks to counter Reformed Lordship Salvation teaching because this approach to evangelism does not offer grace freely to the sinner. It also emphasizes the observation of a person's good works as the sole or primary way to gain assurance of his salvation. In order to oppose this flawed teaching, some of the Free Grace Theology has changed the obvious meaning of Biblical texts which were given to teach the necessity of repentance for salvation and a general transformation that occurs in the Christian life after salvation. This is because God's regenerating life and new nature resides within the realm of their human spirit (1 John 3:9; Phil. 2:13).

Many of the free-gracers have failed to realize that Biblical repentance brings a person to faith and to experience the wide-open arms of free grace. Furthermore, God's transforming wonder occurring in the life of a Christian does not negate the message of free grace – it magnifies it! When correctly understood, the freedom that grace offers is experienced in both salvation and sanctification. To conclude that Christians can receive the free gift of grace and never live by sanctifying grace is an oxymoron and defies the Biblical nature and work of grace in the hearts and lives of people.

I am thankful for all my free grace friends. We agree that grace can only be one thing – free! The gift of eternal life can only be free which is rooted in God’s grace (Rom. 6:23). Justification is free which stems from God’s grace (Rom. 3:24). Salvation is free as a result of God’s grace (Rev. 22:17). Everything is free! At the same time, the Bible teaches that those who are saved by the freedom of grace will in some measure and in various ways live by the transforming freedom that grace brings into their lives. This is because grace not only saves but sanctifies and why every Gospel believer can say:

“I’m free from the fear of tomorrow,
I’m free from the guilt of the past,
For I’ve traded all my shackles,
For a glorious song,
I’m free, praise the Lord, free at last!”

