**So what is the Problem with Grace?
Dr. Daniel Hill - Grace Gospel Missions
Free Grace Alliance National Conference
October 2016**

**(Please note: each time a word is in BLUE, that point corresponds to a power point side)**

**Romans 11:6** *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

**Romans 4:16** *For this reason it (the unconditional promise to Abraham) is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.*

The word **grace** ς is found about 160 times in the NT. It is an important word and even more important concept. I would venture to say the most important functioning concept in the Christian's salvation and life.

What is grace: (defined)

All that God is free to do for us as a result of Christ' deaths upon the Cross.

God's Riches At Christ's Expense

Unlike what Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Adam Clayton Powell tried to say about grace, our embracing of Grace is not Cheap Grace:

It is free to recipient but it is not cheap, it cost God the highest price which was the death of His Son on the Cross

But Grace is more than just a definition, it is a theological and biblical truth that has its implication in every aspect of our view of God, our view of salvation, our view of the Christian Life (sanctification) and even our view of eternity (heaven).

1. **Free Grace teaches that the grace of salvation is absolutely free.**  Since some speak of costly or cheap grace, it is necessary to clarify that grace is totally free. That does not mean it is free to the giver, God. Free Grace means that no payment or merit is required from those to whom it is offered.
2. **Free Grace means that the grace of salvation can be received only through faith.** Since we as sinners can do nothing to earn God's grace, it has to be given as a gift which can only be received through faith. By faith we mean the human response of accepting something as true and trustworthy. It is a conviction, an inner persuasion. This definition precludes any conditions of works, performance, or merit (Romans 4:4-5).
3. **Free Grace believes the object of faith is the Lord Jesus Christ.** Faith must always have an object. Faith itself is not the effective cause of our salvation (We are *saved by grace*), but the instrumental means through which we are saved *(through faith).*
4. **Free Grace holds to the finished work of Christ.** Grace is free because Jesus Christ did all the work on our behalf. His proclamation *It is finished* on the cross means that He made the final and full payment for the penalty for our sins. It also means we cannot add anything to what Jesus accomplished.
5. **Free grace provides the only basis for assurance of salvation.** Any system or belief that requires our performance cannot give assurance of salvation.
6. **Free Grace distinguishes between salvation and discipleship.** While there are conditions for discipleship (deny self, take up your cross, pray, study the Word, etc) grace is absolutely free, and does not demand these conditions. Free Grace believes that the commitments of discipleship should be the result of salvation, not the requirement.
7. **Free Grace teaches that the Christian life is also by grace through faith.** Since we are saved by grace and kept saved by grace, we also grow by grace which is accessed through faith. Grace provides everything we don't deserve and more for anything we need. The free grace of God should **motivate** Christians to worship, serve, and live godly for the *God of all grace*.
8. **FG is the best environment for Christian growth.** The assurance of God's grace and the finished work of Christ allow Christians to grow in an environment of freedom and unconditional love.
9. **Free Grace holds that the Christian is accountable.**  We fulfill the plan of good works God has for us, we are grateful and appreciate grace, we have a higher standard and that is the Holy Spirit, and we can be disciplined in time and lose reward in eternity when we fail in the grace and faith life.
10. **Free Grace is committed to an accurate interpretation of the Bible.**  The Free Grace system is the result of a literal and plain sense approach to the Bible. The Free Grace system seeks above all to be biblical.

So grace is more than a definition, more than a biblical idea, or theological concept. It is an expression of the very character of God. The entire plan of God rests upon it. Our function, our living, our future hope is a result of grace. Grace distinguishes our faith from any of man's religions and man's philosophies.

**AND THAT IS THE RUB so to speak.**

After living in West Africa for five years from 2010 to 2015 and having visited and ministered in many other African countries before that and after that, I have seen a resistance to the idea of grace and a strong resistance to the application of grace.

Now this resistance is subtle. Pastors mention grace, quote verses on grace, most Christians in the third-world would claim to believe in grace BUT when the there is opportunity to apply grace, to live by grace, to think grace, they shy away and embrace a works or performance mentality and manner of life by works.

I want us to consider today some of the reasons for this and how we as teachers of Free Grace can overcome these obstacles. And with this I want us also to consider how many of these factors of resistance are not peculiar to just Africa or the third-world. How many of these factors are true of all mankind and also true here in our country. Do not ever forget that our country is our mission field; the mission filed is anywhere we find ourselves.

**Problems with Grace in the Third-World Church:**

1. Improper post-salvation teaching by early missionaries
2. Lack of proper training for pastors
3. Pastors who see a need to control congregations
4. Law is easier to teach than grace
5. Law is equated with religion more than grace
6. Paying for blessing and prayers (gifts) within the church
7. Prosperity Gospel

**Problems with Grace in Third-World Society:**

1. **Paying for what should be free**

Police protection

Admission to schools

Driver' License

Getting through customs

Meeting with government officials

**Illustration:** Liberian Olympic team, whereas the president's son's armature soccer team (about 80 people) went to Tunisia for a tournament, all expenses paid by the government. But the government refused to pay for their two Olympians.

1. **Corruption of the bribe** (Do you have something for me?)

If you want something done, money must be paid

Government jobs

Meeting with a government committee

Building permits or permits of any kind

Getting out of a violation of law (even up to murder)

Getting Ebola medication provided free by other governments

Politicians embezzling money

Nigeria’s Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed, has stated that 55 Nigerian politicians have stolen over $150 Billion from the country’s treasury from 2006 to 2013.

**Problems with Grace with Fallen Mankind:**

1. Nothing is free and what is said to be free has strings attached

**There ain't no such thing** as a free \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (lunch) TANSTASAFL

The world is taught that nothing is free and if it is free it is going to coast you something. somewhere, sometime.

**Two pictures (must be a catch AND of no value)**

(Article by Ari Schartz filed to the Economist, December 2014). Free. It's such a great word, right? It means to be lacking in cost. Without a price. Costless. 0 dollars. It's great, right? Fantastic, even. Freeeeeee. Except free is a lie. Free doesn't exist. Nothing in life is free. There ain't no such thing as a free lunch (TANSTAAFL.) Remember this and let it be your mantra in how you explore everything ever in life. Everything costs something, including doing nothing. If someone tries to give you something for *free*, the first question should always be, *How much does it cost?* or *What will this cost me.?* If they persist in telling you its still free, then you're probably at Costco eating cheese off a toothpick.

I once read an article about two churches across from each other in the suburbs. They ended up having a dinner the same Sunday night. One had a sign out saying *Free Dinner, Public Welcome.* The other put a sign out that said *Public Invited to Dinner, $2.00 per person.*

Which one do you think had the largest crowd? Right, the one that charged $2.00 a head. Why, well as one man who was in the pay for dinner line said when asked why he did not go across the street for the free dinner, *there has to be a catch, they are going to eventually want me to do something.*

But this is nothing new, even in John 6:27-29 the Jews asked Jesus *What must we do to work the works of God?*

**A few quotes on man's attitude towards the *FREE***

**Christopher S. Penn: There is no such thing as free unless the thing in question is without value.**

**Mike Lipkin:** I would do this (his paid subscription Economic blog) for free but I make you pay so that you understand the value of what you are getting.

[**Theodore Roosevelt**](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/44567.Theodore_Roosevelt): Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty…

**But then there is this from the movie *True Grit*:** [Mattie Ross](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2794962/?ref_=tt_trv_qu): You must pay for everything in this world, one way and another. There is nothing free except the grace of God.

So then along comes God and He says GRACE . . . and man says NO

1. The Old Testament Law (Law of Moses), law of blessing and cursing, to Israel as a nation.

How easy it is for Christians to go back to the OT Law and use it as a rule for faith, practice, and blessing in this age.

And if you are trying to live by the Law you are not living by Grace.

There is no doubt that ML was not a Law of Grace in and of itself.

**Deuteronomy 11:26-28** *See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.*

**Joshua 8:34** *Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law.*

An embracing of Law rules out grace:

Christians who live under Law really struggle with grace. Perhaps not so much with salvation but greatly in their trying to live the Christian Life.

**There are two truths** that they fail to see:

**First, that Jesus came to fulfill the Law** and in doing so we are no longer under Law but under Grace:

**Romans 6:14** *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

**Galatians 2:21** *I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*

**John 1:17** *For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.*

**Matthew 5:17** *Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*

**Galatians 3:13** *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, cursed is everyone who hands on a tree.*

**Secondly, that the ML was given to a nation**, not to individuals:

In over 200 verses in the giving of the ML God told Moses that the law is for the ***sons*** *(plural) of Israel.*

The Law was given as a *divine constitution* for a nation and it was a law of cursing and blessing for a nation. And it applied to believers, unbelievers, foreigners sojourning in the land.

But when it came to individual believers God always met them in grace . . . Illustration: David was not stoned to death for his adultery and complicity in murder.

NOTE: On the mission field in Africa I have found that to be a very convincing biblical truth for moving believers from Law to Grace.

1. Man's inherit nature: Both Jude and Paul refer to an inherit nature, a **basics natural instinct,** in man that is antithetical to grace.

**Jude 1:10** *But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.*

**Colossians 2:8** *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.*

**Colossians 2:2-21** *If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch*

Man' basic instinct, the basic instinct of the world is that of reward for doing good, punishment for doing bad. This is antithetical to grace.

But it is the basic instinct upon which man functions in society. We learn, grow, live with other according to this basic instinct.

So this basic instinct works well in growing up, potty training, playing in the sandbox, family, school, work, living in a community . . . but when we bring that instinct into our relationship with God we fail totally in grace. We just cannot make it work, because it is works.

Paul even wrote in Romans 2 that this is so inherent in mankind that it even functions apart from God:

**Romans 2:14-15** *For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.*

WHERE IS THIS basic instinct come from?

We have already mentioned man in his fallen state, toiling and working hard to get his food from the cursed earth.

But let's go back a little further, to the prohibition in the garden and the fall.

God told Adam and the woman not to eat of the *Tree of the* ***Knowledge*** *of Good and Evil.*

Prior to the fall it was all grace. Man did not even need to know about good and evil. But the serpent, Satan, wanted man to have this knowledge because it is opposed to grace. **Both side** of that tree were opposed to grace.

And once they gained that knowledge what did they do? Did they go out and party, go wild, engage in all kinds of sins? NO, they did *good* . . . covered up their nakedness with fig leaves.

And the woman accepted and approved of the good that Adam did and Adam accepted and approved of the good the woman did.

And for a brief time they thought everything was just fine but then, in the presence of God, they ran and hid.

Because in the presence of the one who had given so much grace, their *works of good* did not work.

**So both by nature (the curse) and by nurture** (tree of the knowledge of good and evil) man is locked into a works mentality that must be broken to live in the grace plan of God.

This is not an easy thing to do:

**Fact:** Grace is antithetical to human thinking. A believer’s disbelief of God’s Gift of everlasting life leads to Spiritual impotence.

**The flesh seeks validation** of itself. We love the commendation of man regarding what we accomplish and perform.

**The Problem of our Current Theology in the Church:**

Theologically we are living in interesting times. The American War for Independence was largely influenced and sustained by the **First Great Awakening**, the revival in the 1730s and 40s in which Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield preached a greatness of God and His grace. While their teaching was mostly reform in nature it did place an emphasis on grace.

One hundred years later we had a **Second Great Awakening** whose leading proponent was Charles Finney. There was a shift at that time away from an emphasis on what God had done in salvation to what man must do for salvation.

Princeton theologian **B. B. Warfield** remarked, that Finney's teaching *is not theology at all. This is ethic in which God might be eliminated entirely from Finney's theory without injury to it.*

**Finney later wrote:** *Regeneration consists in the sinner changing his ultimate choice, intention, and preference; or in changing from selfishness to love and benevolence; or, in other words, in turning from the supreme choice of self-gratification, to the supreme love of God and the equal love of his neighbor. Of course the* ***subject*** *of regeneration must be an* ***agent*** *in the work*

Thus the subject or object of regeneration is not God, but Man so Finney saw salvation as a **cooperating** effort of Man and God.

**It must also be noted** that the great sending of missionaries from the US and Canada began to occur during this time of the influence of Charles Finney.

TODAY, this teaching of the mid 1800s has greatly influenced the social gospel, performance based salvation and faith, and liberal denominations.

BUT IN SOME WAYS, even the evangelical church has outdone Finney in some very subtle ways.

So much of the emphasis in the church today is on the pronoun "I." This is found in many of our worship songs and also in the repeated teaching on obedience. This obedience is not so much a result of faith and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit as it is an obedience of self determination, which is nothing more than an obedience of the flesh.

**Obedience before Faith, Law before Spirit, Works to gain Grace . . . All putting the Cart before the Horse**

**A recent study** by Life Way Research and Ligonier Ministries has found that 74% of Evangelicals believe that a person must contribute his or her own efforts for personal salvation.

This emphasis is furthered by a lack of good Hermeneutics, common in Africa and also becoming more common in the Western World where pastors and teachers seems to go from Observation to Application without Interpretation.

And thus most sermons provide rules and law, guidelines and standards, those things that may be God's ideal for Holy living but leave them up to the individual believer to perform by their own effort. This adds to grace and . . .

**Adding to grace, either before or after faith, nullifies grace**

**Galatians 5:4** *You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

**So we have identified the problem,** now in the few minutes left, **what is the Solution?**

1. First, **be aware of the problem.** Just like in confession of sin (I John 1:9) we will not seek to be delivered from a problem if we fail to admit there is a problem.
2. Secondly, **be aware of our inherit nature** that stands against grace:
3. Conditioning: the idea of owing, no free lunch, must pay for what one receives, if it is free it is not of value
4. Pride: We want to boast in what we have accomplished. The flesh wants to validate itself, it wants the praise and compliments.

Doing something appeals to our basic instinct and the elementary rule of life. Galatians 6:14 our boast must be in the Cross

1. Insecurity: Easier to keep law, parameters, and limits then to have faith.

Controversy of Acts 15

1. Recognize that **God's plan of grace is what distinguishes Christianity** from Religion:

J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M: *Since works are presented as the basis of God’s blessing in all the other religions of the world, grace distinguishes biblical Christianity as unique from all these other religions. Look carefully at their beliefs and you will find man doing something to get God’s blessing, whatever that is touted to be.*

1. Se the over-arching **emphasis on Grace that God places in His Word:**

J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M writes *… There is no division of doctrine that is not related in some way or another—often vitally—to the concept of grace. Inspiration, sin, salvation, Christian living, even future things are but a few examples of related doctrines.*

1. **Study and read the Word of God with the eyes of Grace:**

**Mark 4:24-25** *And He (Jesus) was saying to them, Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure (Grace of Law, Works or Faith) it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.*

The ones who reject grace get their system of works from the same Bible from which you receive Grace.

1. **Humility:** Grace keeps us humble which allows us to experience more grace

**James 4:6** *But He gives a greater grace. Therefore . . . God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

Chuck Swindoll: Have you ever had anything in life that just exploded you little world into a much bigger one? Some event that gave you a quest for life that you had never known before? I remember the first time I ever snow skied. I mean really skied, not just fall down. The first time down an intermediate slope with no fear, only joy. I was free, I was flying (not falling). In that one event my world expanded, the view ahead of me looking to the miles of endless mountains, the speed, the freedom, all life expanding experiences.

And that is what Grace can do when you awaken to it. It expands your life and you will soon find you cannot life without it . . . you are free

**WHY WOULD WE EVER** TURN AWAY FROM THE GRACE OF GOD?

Copyright © 2016, Grace Gospel Missions