

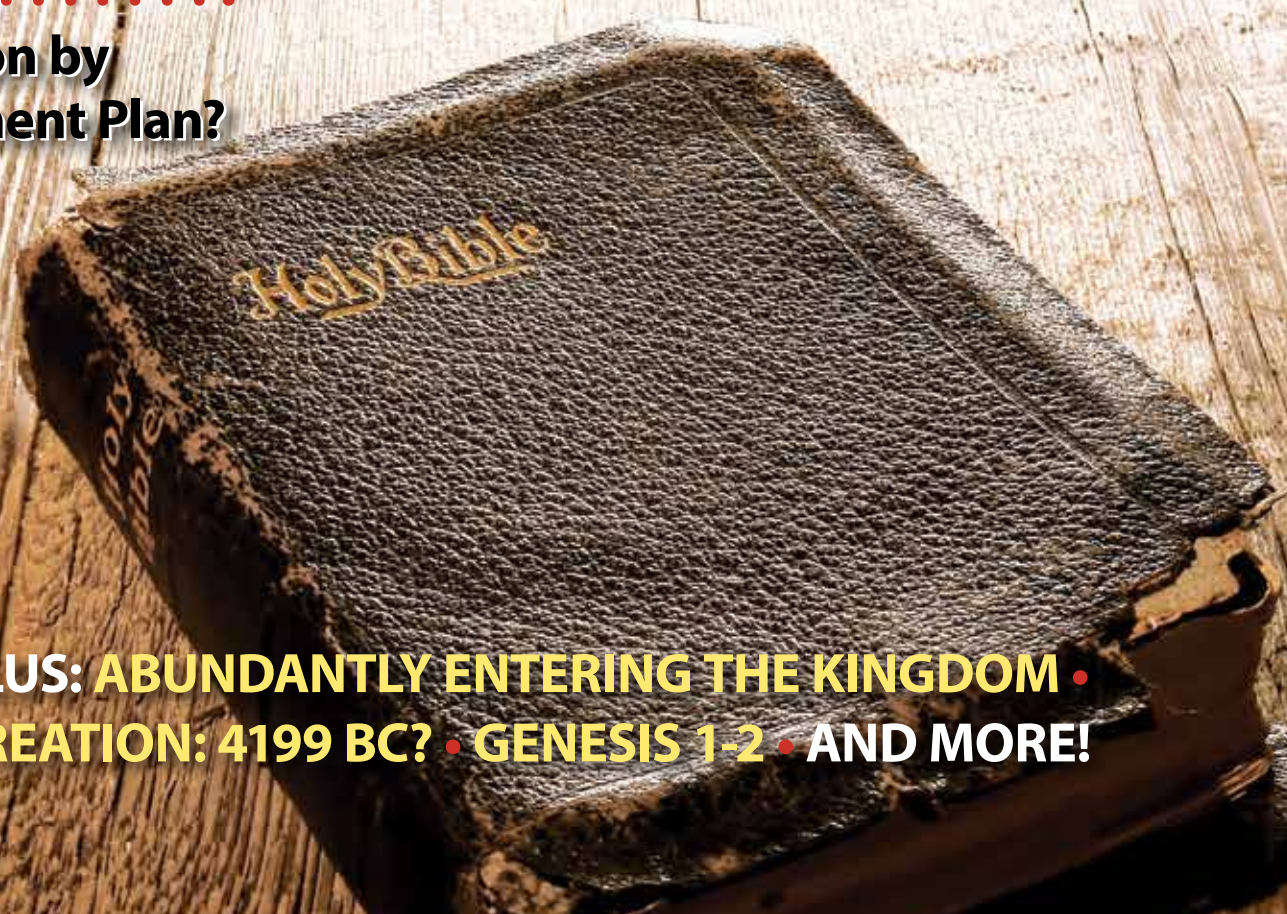
A Critical Examination of Seven Bible Translations

(PART 1)

The Usefulness of Faith

.....
Is Joseph Prince "Free Grace"?

.....
Salvation by Installment Plan?



PLUS: ABUNDANTLY ENTERING THE KINGDOM • CREATION: 4199 BC? • GENESIS 1-2 • AND MORE!

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In this issue we enter a new year. It is hard for me to believe it is 2015. Just a few years ago in 1973, I graduated from college. Time does fly.

This issue begins with a critical examination by me of seven Bible translations in light of some key verses that are important to Free Grace theology.

David Janssen has an article that helps bring out the practical implications of James's argument about faith.

There is a "Voice from the Past," where Phil Congdon challenges the idea that God gives us a provisional salvation in installments.

We have printed an excerpt from our forthcoming *Tough Texts* book, where Zane and I discuss the meaning of "fruits" in Matt 7:15-20.

J. Paul Tanner gives us an overview of the Bible's chronology, pointing to the date of creation, followed by a chart of the different Evangelical interpretations of Genesis 1-2, from more literal to less literal.

Ken Yates discusses the meaning of Peter's saying that we should make our calling and election sure (2 Pet 1:10-11), and how it relates to the Messianic kingdom.

And finally, Shawn responds to the many inquiries we have received asking whether popular television preacher Joseph Prince is Free Grace.

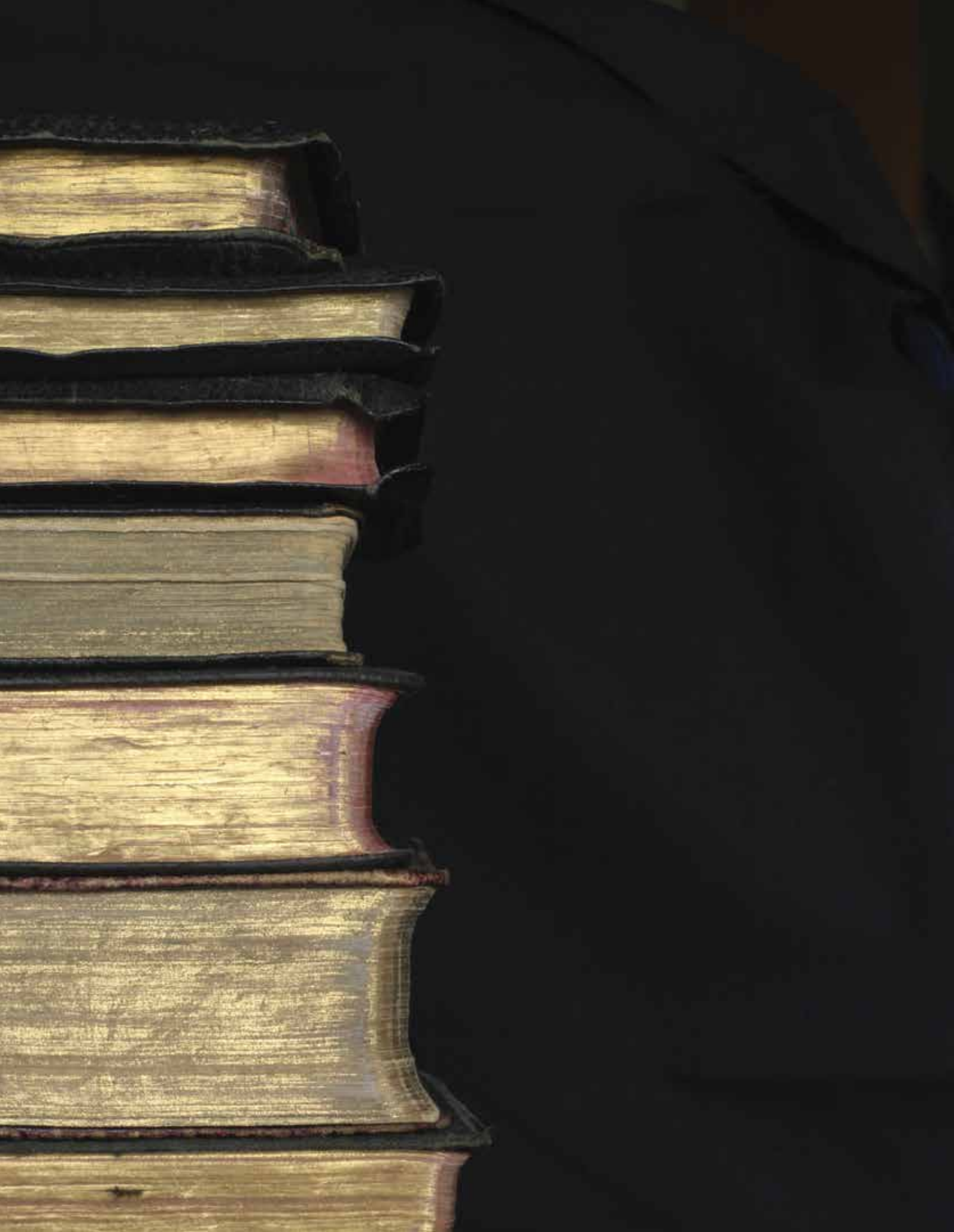
My condolences to Hal Mills and their daughters in the sudden going-home of Marlene on Dec 4. And my condolences to Ruth Radmacher and their children on the passing of Earl on Dec 8. I love the saying he made famous, "This life is training time for reigning time." Amen!

Every January people make New Year's resolutions. Here's mine. May we remain steadfast in the faith no matter what happens. Whether by life or death, may we magnify our Lord and Savior. With several publications in the production schedule, we look forward to ministering with you in proclaiming the good news of eternal life.



New Year's Resolutions

Bob Wilkin, **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**



A Critical Examination of Seven Bible Translations (Part 1)

BY BOB WILKIN

There have been many articles which have evaluated modern Bible translations in light of theological concerns, in light of their handling of the Old and New Testaments, and in terms of their use of English style.¹

In this article, which is a modified version of a journal article I wrote on this subject a decade ago, I evaluate seven major translations in terms of how they handle passages of special interest to the Grace message. Those seven are the NIV, NASB, NET Bible, HCSB, ESV, KJV, and NKJV.

Before I discuss each, I think it is important to explain the difference between the Greek texts that five of these translations utilize versus the other two.

Critical Text Versus Majority Text Translations

Of the seven, only the KJV and the NKJV are translating what is often called the Majority Text (MT) of the NT. For example, in 1 John 4:19 the KJV and NKJV include the word *Him* after “we love,” but the other five translations do not. The options are: “We love *Him* because He first loved us” versus “We love because He first loved us.” The issue here is not translation style. The issue is the Greek manuscripts that they choose to translate.

The KJV and the NKJV translate the Textus Receptus (TR), which *in most cases* reflects the reading of the majority of outstanding Greek manuscripts. The other five translations translate what is called the Critical Text (CT). Though there are thousands of manuscripts for most books of the NT, the NIV, NASB, NET, HCSB, and ESV essentially translate three manuscripts (or only two if these three do not agree). In their view these three early manuscripts (Aleph, A, and B) were nearly perfect manuscripts and thus when they agree, that is the correct reading even if a thousand or more manuscripts contradict that reading.

Here are a few examples of where this impacts Free Grace theology in some way:

John 6:47. “He who believes *in Me* has everlasting life” (MT) versus “He who believes has everlasting life” (CT).

2 John 8. “Look to yourselves, that *we* do not lose those things we worked for, but that *we* may receive a full reward” (MT) versus “Watch yourselves, that *you* do not lose what we have accomplished, but that *you* may receive a full reward” (CT, though the NIV reads *you* in all three places).

Rev 22:19. “If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from *the Tree of Life*, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (MT, CR) versus “If anyone takes away... God shall take away his part from *the Book of Life...*” (TR). [This is a major example of the TR varying from the MT.]

John 7:53-8:11. The account of the woman caught in adultery is bracketed by the NIV, NASB, ESV, HCSB, and NET, indicating those versions all believe this testing of Jesus is not Scripture at all. The KJV and NKJV both consider this Scripture.

Mark 16:9-20. The ending of Mark’s Gospel is not considered Scripture in the NIV, NASB, ESV, HCSB, and the NET Bible. The KJV and NKJV consider this Scripture.

Can Faith Save Him? James 2:14

Note how our seven translations handle this verse, and especially pay attention to the different ways they translate the last part of it, i.e., the question dealing with the connection between faith and salvation/deliverance. I have italicized key differences.

KJV: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?”

NKJV: “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”

NASB: “What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but has no works? Can *that faith* save him?”

NIV: “What good is it, my

brothers, if a man *claims* to have faith but has no deeds? Can *such faith* save him?”

NET: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone *claims* to have faith but does not have works? Can *this kind of faith* save him?”

HCSB: “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can *his* faith save him?”

ESV “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can *that faith* save him?”

“Translators sometimes find it difficult to set aside their theological convictions when translating.”

The NIV, NASB, NET, and ESV qualify faith the second time it appears in the verse with words which question the validity of the faith: “*such* faith,” “*that* faith,” “*this kind of* faith,” or “*that* faith,” respectively. The KJV and NKJV do not supply the qualifiers. Though the HCSB has a qualifier (“*his* faith”), there is nothing in the qualifier that questions the faith.

The Greek merely refers to “the faith” (*hē pistis*). The definite article is also used with *pistis* in the nominative case in vv 17, 20, 22, and 26. Yet in none of these other places do the NIV, NASB, NET, or ESV translate the expression as *that faith, such faith, or this kind of faith*. The translators are making

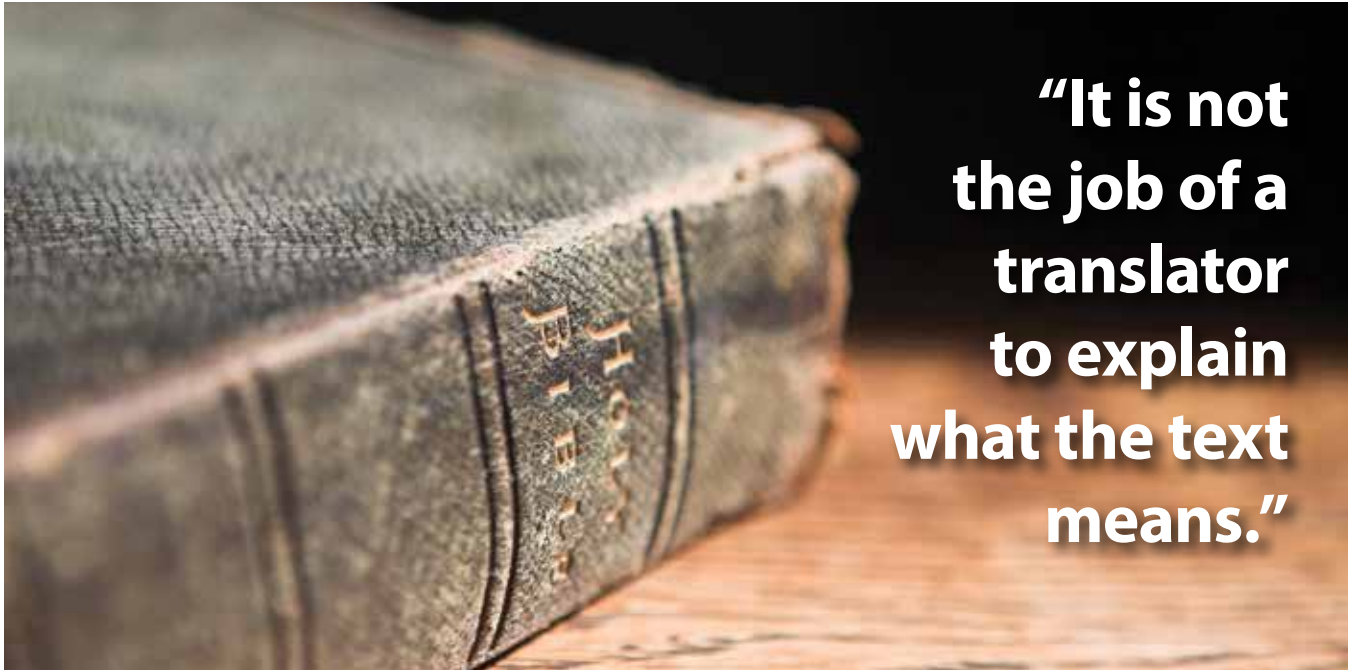
an interpretive decision for the readers here. The KJV, NKJV, and the HCSB more accurately represent the Greek, with no pejorative description of the faith in question.

In addition, the NIV and NET also seem to be interpreting for the reader when it translates *ean... legē tis* (literally “if someone says”) as “if a man *claims*” or “if someone *claims*.” Yet this destroys the verbal tie here with v 12. There the same verb, *legō*, is used and clearly it refers to *speaking*, not *claiming*. Note even the NIV and NET translations of v 12: “*Speak* and act as those who are going to [or will] be judged by the [or a] law that gives freedom.”

The issue in Jas 1:21–2:26 is that we are to be doers and not merely speakers. We find the same thing in 1 John 3:16–18. The issue in v 12 is *saying* versus doing, not *claiming* versus doing. Claiming has a pejorative tone. Why wasn’t v 12 translated that way then: “Claim and act as those who are going to be judged...”? The reason is obvious. That isn’t the point in v 12. The other five translations (KJV, NKJV, NASB, HCSB, ESV) correctly translated *ean... legē tis*.

The Free Grace person using the NIV or NET is doubly handicapped on this verse. The NASB and ESV users are also handicapped, but not quite as much. The KJV, NKJV, and HCSB are friendly to the Free Grace position in this verse since their translation does not try to interpret the verse for the readers.

This passage serves to illustrate how translators sometimes find it difficult to set aside their theological convictions when translating. If the goal were simply to convey what the original language says as clearly as possible in English, then



**“It is not
the job of a
translator
to explain
what the text
means.”**

they would not resort to this sort of interpretive rendering of the text.

Anyone Named Brother: 1 Corinthians 5:11

The key question here is how the various translations handle the Greek words *tis adelphos onomazomenos*. I have italicized the portion of the translations below that handle those words.

KJV: “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, *if any man that is called a brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater...”

NKJV: “But now I have written to you not to keep company *with anyone named a brother*, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater...”

ESV: “But now I am writing to you not to associate *with anyone who bears the name of brother* if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater...”

NASB: “But actually, I wrote to you not to associate *with any so-called brother* if he should be an

immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater...”

NIV: “But now I am writing to you that you must not associate *with anyone who calls himself a brother* but is sexually immoral or greedy, or an idolater...”

NET: “But now I am writing to you not to associate *with anyone who calls himself a Christian* who is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater...”

HCSB: “But now I am writing you not to associate *with anyone who claims to be a believer* who is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater...”

In this passage Paul is telling the believers in the church of Corinth that they are to judge those who are inside, not those outside, the church (vv 10, 12). If one believes those inside the church are believers, then Paul is telling the believers in Corinth to separate from immoral or covetous or idolatrous *believers in the church*. If, however, one believes that those inside the church includes both believers and

unbelievers [or false professors], then Paul is telling the believers in Corinth to separate from immoral or covetous or idolatrous *unbelievers in the church*.

If the job of the translator is to translate and not interpret, the translator should seek to make his translation of this passage as vague as the original. In this case the first two translations, the KJV and NKJV, fit the bill. A Greek participle, *onomazomenos*, has a literal meaning of “anyone bearing the name.” The NKJV and ESV get it just right and the KJV is close. The other four, the NASB, NIV, HCSB, and NET all interpret this phrase for the reader rather than translate it.

There is nothing in the Greek that suggests translations such as “any so-called brother,” “anyone who calls himself a brother,” “anyone who calls himself a Christian,” or “anyone who claims to be a believer.” The words themselves and the context strongly suggest that a genuine believer is in view (compare vv 10 and 12). There is

also nothing in the text about what the person *calls himself*. The Greek verb *to call* is not found in this verse. Nor is the word *himself*. Nor are the words *Christian* or *believer*. All these things are artificially placed there.

The last four translations reflect an interpretive bias which springs out of Reformed theology. If there is no such thing as a believer who is immoral or covetous or an idolater, then Paul isn't warning about believers here. But note well that even if I was convinced this passage was warning about false professors, I still would translate it "anyone who bears the name brother" or "anyone named brother." The reason is because it is not the job of a translator to explain what the text means. It is his job to give the best


possible translation and leave the interpretation to the reader.

Conclusion to Part 1

In terms of which translation of the New Testament best handles the actual text that God gave us, I have argued that the KJV and NKJV stand out since they alone follow the Majority Text.

In terms of the two test verses we considered, four of the seven proved best. In terms of the translation of Jas 2:14, the KJV, NKJV, and the HCSB were best. For 1 Cor 5:11 the best three were the KJV, NKJV, and the ESV.

All of the seven translations considered are well done and can be used profitably by believers. However, some of those translations interpret, rather than translate,

upon occasion, and sometimes when they do they introduce interpretations that are antithetical to the Free Grace position. The reader should be aware of this, regardless of which translation he uses. 

Bob Wilkin is the Editor of Grace in Focus Magazine and the Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society.

1. See, for example, Michael A. Lyons and William A. Tooman, "Three Recent Bible Translations: An Old Testament Perspective," *JETS* (September 2003): 497-520; Peter H. Davids, "Three Recent Bible Translations: A New Testament Perspective," *JETS* (September 2003): 521-32; Daniel E. Ritchie, "Three Recent Bible Translations: A Literary and Stylistic Perspective," *JETS* (September 2003): 533-45.



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The Usefulness of Faith

(James 2:14-26)

By David Janssen

Do you have china dishes in a china cabinet at your house? We do. My wife was given a set when she was young, and ever since we got married, we have been moving boxes of them around with us. Now in Sandy, Utah, we even have a nice oak cabinet to hold our china!

“Our faith in Jesus Christ is designed to do good works as part of our sanctification. By doing good works, our faith is useful and beneficial to others and ourselves.”

This last move, though, was the last straw. We needed to either start using the china or get rid of it because we almost never used it. Unfortunately, like china in a cabinet, our faith in Jesus Christ can sometimes be “just for display.”

In our commitment to accurately interpret Jas 2:14-26, we may miss the main application of the text. James is a book about sanctification, written to believers focusing on their works in vv 2:14-26. It is not about our works being part of our justification before God. A sanctification interpretation is critical to understanding the passage, but applying the main point of the passage to our lives is the final step.

Useful Faith?

James’ main point: *A believer’s faith must be put into action to be useful.* James makes it clear in the example he gives at the beginning of his discussion (2:14-16) that the subject of 2:14-26 is “usefulness”. James starts (2:14) and ends (2:16) with similar phrases, both of which contain the word “use” (NASB) applied to helping a fellow believer with immediate physical needs.

“What *use* is it, my brethren, if . . .” (Jas 2:14 NASB, emphasis added).

“. . . what *use* is that?” (Jas 2:16 NASB, emphasis added).

The topic of this section of James is the *usefulness* of a believer’s faith. The word “use” is the idea of “good” (ESV, NIV), “benefit,” or “profit” (NKJV). The point James is making is that a believer’s faith is not helpful to another believer who is hungry unless that believer provides some food. He is not questioning the readers’ faith in Jesus Christ (acknowledged in 2:1), but he is questioning the present, temporal value of their faith if they are not acting on it!

Our good works are not a factor in receiving, confirming, proving or maintaining eternal life. Our faith in Jesus Christ is designed to do good works as part of our sanctification. By doing good works, our faith is

useful and beneficial to others and ourselves. This is the point of Jas 2:14-26.

Three Examples of Useful Faith

James includes three examples of faith being useful: 1) Giving a fellow believer basic physical supplies they need, 2) Abraham being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, and 3) Rahab hiding and protecting the Israeli spies.

By way of application from example 1, our faith is useful when we provide physical needs to other believers. This is probably the main application James wants to express to his readers because the next two examples are unique, specific, historical situations and hence are not as directly applicable.

Providing for the physical needs of a fellow believer will take a variety of forms depending on the situation. Here are some suggestions of what “meeting physical needs” might look like at a suburban church in America.

Giving a family a \$200 gift card to a grocery store because the father is between jobs, or paying for a \$180 prescription for someone who doesn’t have the money.

Taking three small children for the weekend so the parents can get some much-needed rest. A very real physical need!

Going to court with a friend whose son is facing charges for stealing, might meet a very real (emotional) need in the family’s life.

Providing a free room and board at your house for a few months for a divorced woman who is trying to become financially self-sufficient.

The Usefulness of Abraham’s Faith

Applying the principle of Abraham’s action would mean obeying what God tells us to do in His Word. As we obey, we mature spiritually (Abraham’s actions helped him mature [“perfected” Jas 2:22]). Obedience is how our faith is made useful. Acknowledging the fact the Lord does not require believers to be willing



to sacrifice their children, there are many other things the Lord does ask us to do which can be very difficult in certain circumstances. For example, deciding to be faithful to

focus is not on their lives being characterized by numerous good works. Sometimes a specific decision we make to obey the Lord is a key turning point in our life.

at the beginning of this section. The bookends (or “inclusio”) of the contrasting concepts of “use” (Jas 2:14,16), and “useless” or “dead” (Jas 2:20,26), support the main point of

“Sometimes a specific decision we make to obey the Lord is a key turning point in our life.”

your very difficult and unresponsive spouse instead of committing adultery has lifelong positive consequences including spiritual growth.

The Usefulness of Rahab’s Faith

We are following Rahab’s example when we protect other believers from harm, like Rahab protected the Jewish spies from harm. Once again, this would be useful for those being protected and for us. Rahab’s faith was useful enough to deliver her and her relatives from physical death and destruction (Josh 6:23). Today we might help and protect a believer from being taken advantage of when dealing with legal issues such as taxes and divorce.

Turning Points

The examples of Abraham and Rahab are specific decisions made at critical times in their lives. The

Whether or not we marry a follower of Jesus Christ is certainly an example of a specific, moment-in-time decision with lifelong significance.

This list of three examples in James is not an exhaustive list of works or a complete list of categories because of the frequent use of the general word “works” (12 times in Jas 2:14-26). Rather, it is a short list of specific examples to support the main point: Our faith needs to be acted on to be useful.

Useless Faith?

Stated negatively, James says, “faith without works is *useless*” (Jas 2:20 NASB, emphasis added) and rephrased “faith without works is *dead*” (Jas 2:26 NASB, emphasis added). James’ use of the word “dead” means “useless” in this context. He concludes this section with a focus on *the uselessness* of faith without works (Jas 2:20,26) in contrast to the potential *usefulness* of a faith that takes action (Jas 2:14,16)

“usefulness” of a believers faith in this temporal, physical life.

Putting China to Good Use!

My wife had no trouble deciding what to do with the china. If you come to our house for lunch or dinner, we will bring out the china dishes—even if we are serving hot dogs! We put them to good use. How useful is your faith? Do you take it out of the “china cabinet,” get it dirty, and put it to use? That’s what it’s designed for. ■

David Janssen is the Equipping Pastor of Grace Community Bible Church in Sandy, UT.

Salvation by Installment Plan?

By Phil Congdon

Many Bible teachers are fond of a saying that goes like this: “You are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.” Doesn’t that sound neat? It states a fundamental truth—that we are saved by faith alone—then turns around and states that while it is faith alone that saves us, that faith is never alone. This saying is used to teach the idea that if a person puts their faith in Jesus Christ, but doesn’t live a right kind of life, they aren’t saved. But wait a minute; let’s plug in our logical minds for a minute and see if this is really neat or nonsense.

The phrase, “You are saved by faith alone” is obviously true. Scripture repeatedly tells us that it is faith alone without works which saves (e.g., Eph 2:8-9). But what does the second phrase say? Incredibly it says exactly the opposite. We can paraphrase it this way: “Faith [in Christ] alone saves you, but if your faith [in Christ] is alone, it doesn’t save you.” This kind of illogical thinking allows some theologians to turn the truth of the gospel on its head and make salvation a result of faith plus good works.



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In response, these teachers state that they do not mean faith + works = salvation, but rather faith = salvation + works. But the end result is the same. If I pay cash for a car and drive it home, it is no different than if I were to drive it home and pay for it over the next few years. It doesn’t matter *when* you pay—before or after you take possession. If you *ever* have to do good works to be saved, then salvation isn’t free, it’s something you earn.

The Apostle Paul knew this. That’s why he wrote, “To the *one who does not work*, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness” (Rom 4:5). **GM**

Phil Congdon is Pastor of New Braunfels Bible Church in TX.

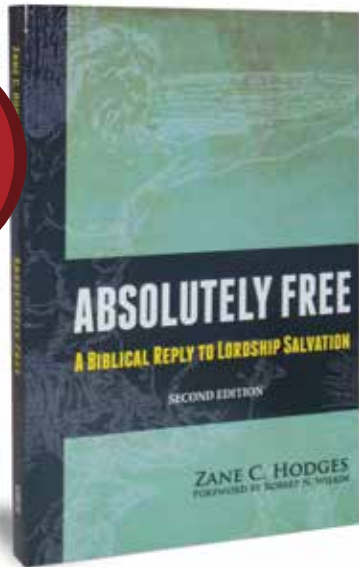
*This article appeared in *Grace in Focus* in October of 1989.

In Memoriam: Marlene Mills went to be with the Lord on Dec 4, 2014. Her passing was sudden and unexpected. Marlene and her husband Hal have been regulars at the GES conference since the beginning. On Dec 8, **Dr. Earl Radmacher**, after fighting the good fight, also departed to be with the Lord. Generations of Radmacher’s students, both in and out of the classroom, are continuing his legacy.



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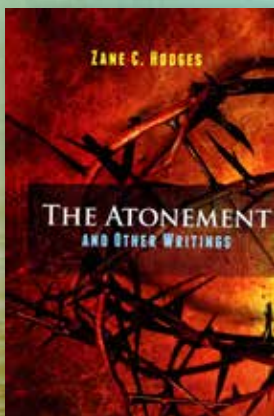
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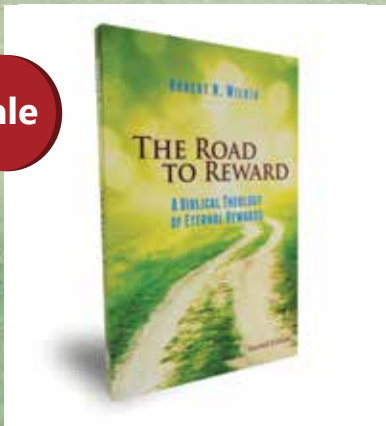
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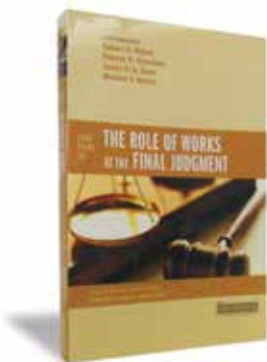
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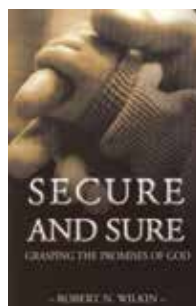
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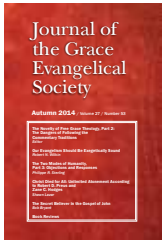
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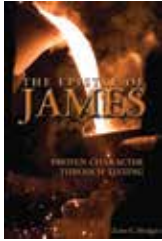
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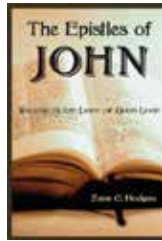
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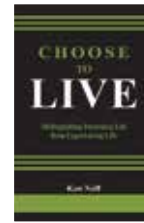
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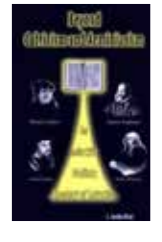
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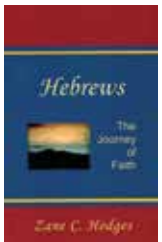
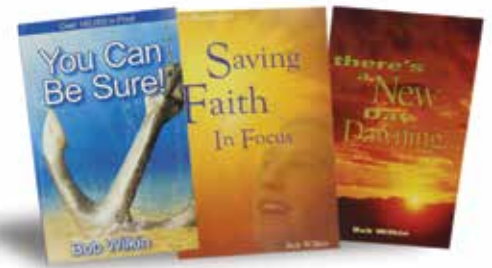


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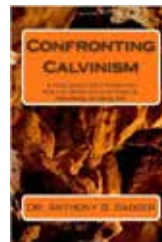
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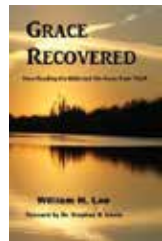
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By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them (Matthew 7:15-20)

By Bob Wilkin and
Zane Hodges

Question: Doesn't Matthew 7:15-20 teach that all believers will inevitably have some good fruit in their lives? Does the evidence of good works in a person's life prove they are saved?

Bob Wilkin (BW): The saying, "You will know them by their fruits," is found twice in Matt 7:15-20, at the start of the paragraph in v 16 and again at the end in v 20. Verse 15 and the first part of v 16 reads, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits."

Zane Hodges (ZH): In approaching this passage it's important to notice the two preceding verses (vv 13-14). Jesus says, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life and there are few who find it."

These verses are the first verses of the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. Immediately preceding them is our Lord's summary of the body of the Sermon, "Therefore whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 7:12). In the conclusion He is saying, "Be careful that you get started in the right place. Be careful that you go through the gate that leads to life and not the gate that leads to destruction." So, in terms of the larger audience, both the general audience and the disciples, He wants them to be sure that their starting point is the correct one.

This leads immediately into Matt 7:15-20 which deals with the question of false prophets. One of the problems that people have in finding the *correct* gate is that there are people who lead them to the *wrong* gate. There are people who profess prophetic ability or profess to be sent by God but lead people astray. Wanting His followers to avoid such false prophets, Christ explains how

they can be identified: *They are known by their fruits.*

So, first of all we should notice that He's not talking about professing Christians. He's not talking about the issue of whether we're saved or unsaved. He's talking about how we can spot a false prophet. I have often said that if I could lay a bet on earth and collect in heaven, I would lay a bet that this passage doesn't refer to *works* at all and that *the fruits* are not *the works* of the false prophet. That is almost obvious on the surface because the false prophets look like sheep ("Beware of false prophets, who come to you *in sheep's clothing*") but inwardly "they are ravenous wolves." You can't spot false prophets by their behavior.

What would be the real test of a false prophet? It is *the message* that he brings. A false prophet is uncovered, not by his *works*, but by his *words*. That this is the correct interpretation of our Lord's warning is confirmed in Matt 12:33-37. In that passage Jesus once again



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A photograph of three people in a library. A woman with long dark hair, wearing a red top and dark pants, sits on a wooden chair. A man in a light blue patterned shirt and dark pants sits on a wooden chair next to her. Another man in a grey and white striped shirt and blue jeans sits on a wooden chair to the right, leaning forward. They are surrounded by tall bookshelves filled with books. The scene is brightly lit, likely from a window in the background.

*A Free Grace
library at the click
of a button.*

Calculating the Date of Creation and the Flood:

A Young-Earth Creationist View

THINKSTOCK

By J. Paul Tanner

The proposals presented here are based on the assumption that the dates given in the Bible are taken at face value and that the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are “tight” (without gaps). A detailed elaboration and defense of these calculations appear in my article “Old Testament Chronology and Its Implications for the Creation and Flood Accounts” (*Bibliotheca Sacra* 172 [Jan-Mar 2015]).

931 BC. Inauguration of Rehoboam as King of Judah

Rehoboam’s accession year was from Nisan 1 to Tishri 1 of 931 BC [These are months on the ancient Hebrew calendar]. This is established by correlation with the Battle of Qarqar in 853 BC (a firm date in Assyrian chronology). In this battle, the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III fought a 12-king alliance that included Hadadezer of Damascus and King Ahab of Israel. King Ahab died in 853 BC, shortly after this battle. The Assyrian victory is recorded on the Kurkh Monolith Stela. From this historical event, we can reliably calculate Rehoboam’s inauguration as 931 BC based on Ahab’s death and the dates given for the Judean kings in the Bible.

This is further supported by the invasion of Shishak, King of Egypt, in 925 BC (= Sheshonq I who ruled approximately 943-922 BC). See 2 Chr 12:2-9. He invaded Canaan in Rehoboam’s 5th year, which is understood to be his 5th regnal year.

+ 40 yrs. *The years of Solomon’s reign (971-931 BC). See 1 Kgs 11:41-43.*

971 BC. Inauguration of Solomon as King

- 4 yrs. *The construction of the Temple was started in Solomon’s 4th year. See 1 Kgs 6:1.*

Solomon’s first regnal year was Tishri 1 of 971 BC to Tishri 1 of 970 BC. The temple was started in the 2nd month of his fourth year (i.e., his 4th regnal year), which would be in the spring of 967 BC.

967 BC. Start of Solomon’s Temple

+479 yrs, *The years from the Exodus to the start of the Temple construction. See 1 Kgs 6:1.*

Since the temple was started in the 480th year of the “going out” from Egypt, 479 complete years had transpired. [Note that the LXX has 440 years rather than 480].

1446 BC. Date of the Exodus

This would be March/April of 1446 BC (in the first month of Nisan).

+ 430 yrs. *The years that the “sons of Israel” lived in Egypt. See Exod 12:40-41.*

The LXX adds the words “and in the land of Canaan” in Exod 12:40, and on this basis some scholars use the figure 400 years rather than 430 for the time they

lived in Egypt. I go with the Hebrew Bible and use the figure 430.

1876 BC. The year that the Hebrews formally entered Egypt.

This is the point at which Jacob and the “whole family” came into Egypt, at which time Jacob was presented before Pharaoh. See Gen 47:7-9 and compare Acts 7:11-15.

1876 BC. The year that the Hebrews entered Egypt.

+ 130 yrs. *The age of Jacob according to Gen 47:7-9 when he was presented before Pharaoh.*

2006 BC. The year of Jacob’s birth.

+ 60 yrs. *The age of Isaac at the time of Jacob’s birth. See Gen 25:26.*

2066 BC. The year of Isaac’s birth.

+100 yrs. *The age of Abram (later, Abraham) at the time of Isaac’s birth. See Gen 21:5.*

2166 BC. The year of Abram’s birth [Abram lived 175 yrs (Gen 25:7), 2166-1991 BC].

Problem: We do not know the exact year in which Abram’s father, Terah, was born. The text is vague as to how old Terah was when Abram was born.

Genesis 11:26 indicates that Terah was 70 when he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. However, there is a conflict if we assume that Abram was the first-born son. According to Gen 12:4, Abram was age 75 when he departed Haran for Canaan in 2091 BC. But according to Acts 7:4, Abram left Haran *after* his father had died. Genesis 11:32 tells us that Terah died at age 205. Therefore, Terah could not have been 70 at Abram’s birth *and also* have died before Abram left Haran.

Based on this data, the latest date that Terah could have been born would be 205 years before Abram departed from Haran, i.e., 2296 BC (2091 + 205). To calculate the earliest date that Terah could have been born, we need to consider Abram’s wife Sarah.

Terah left Ur for Haran *after* Abram and Sarah were married (see Gen 11:31). We know from Gen 17:17 that Sarah was ten years younger than Abram, and from Gen 23:1 that she lived to be 127 years old. If Abram was born in 2166 BC, then Sarah lived 2156-2029 BC. We do not know how old Sarah was at the time of her marriage to Abram, but we

can probably assume she was *at least* 15 years old. Therefore, Abram and Sarah were married by at least 2141 BC (2156 – 15), and Terah and the family moved to Haran sometime *after* 2141 (more likely several years later).

I conclude from this, then, that Terah died sometime between the years 2141 BC (the earliest likely date of Abram’s marriage) and 2091 BC (when Abram left Haran for Canaan). Since Terah lived to be 205 (Gen 11:32), then the earliest he could have been born would be 2346 BC (2141 + 205) and the latest 2296 BC (2091 + 205)—a 50 year span. Or, we can say that Terah was born in 2321 BC ± 25 years (averaging 2346 and 2296).

2321 BC ± 25 yrs. Terah’s birth [All dates earlier than Abraham can only be dated to ± 25 yrs].

+ 220 yrs. *The years from Arpachshad to Terah according to the Genealogy in Gen 11:10-26.*

+ 2 yrs. *The time after the flood until Shem became the father of Arpachshad. See Gen 11:10.*

2543 BC (± 25 yrs). Noah’s Flood.

+ 600 yrs. *The years from Noah’s birth until the Flood. See Gen 7:6.*

3143 BC ± 25 yrs. Noah’s birth.

+ 1056 yrs. *The years from Adam’s birth until Noah’s birth according to the Genealogy in Gen 5:3-32.*

4199 BC (± 25 yrs). The Approximate Date of Creation. See Genesis 1. 

J. Paul Tanner is currently a traveling teacher and curriculum writer for BEE World Ministries, and lives near Tyler, Texas

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1)

Evangelical Views of the Creation

More Literal

Young Earth View

Traditional View. God created everything a few thousand years ago in six consecutive, 24-hour days, starting at Gen 1:1. Verse 2 depicts the earth in its initial incomplete stage, before God formed and filled heaven and earth (v 3ff).

John Whitcomb
Terry Mortenson
Todd Beall
William Barrick
Douglas F. Kelly
John MacArthur
Answers in Genesis

Gap Theory

There is a long gap of time (perhaps billions of years) between an original creation in Gen 1:1 and a judged earth depicted in v 2. This is followed by a new re-creation in six literal days starting at v 3.

George H. Pember
Harry Rimmer
Arthur Custance
Scofield Ref. Bible

Pre-Creation Chaos

Genesis 1:1 is a summary statement for the whole chapter. Verse 2 depicts the earth negatively (not by God—something wrong has happened to it). The new creation starts in v 3 (which implies a previous creation).

Bruce K. Waltke
Allen P. Ross

Promised Land View

Genesis 1:1 is the creation of the entire universe over millions (perhaps billions) of years. Verse 3ff describes God's work to prepare the Promised Land (i.e., Garden of Eden) for Israel. [Hebrew word *'erets* can mean *earth* or *land*]

John H. Sailhamer

Creation Account in Genesis 1–2

By J. Paul Tanner

Less Literal

Old Earth Views

Millions of years were involved in the “six-day” creation week.

Day-Age View

Each day = millions of years (not 24 hour days).

Intermittent Day-Age View:

A day = 24 hours, but millions of years between each day.

R. C. Newman
John C. Lennox

Day-Age

Gleason Archer
Walter Kaiser
Millard Erickson
J. P. Moreland
Reason to Believe (Hugh Ross)

Figurative Day Views

Relies on literary analysis to take the days of the week figuratively.

Framework View

Days are not 24 hour days or sequential, but used to convey theology.

Literary Day View

Richard E. Averbeck

Analogical Day View

C. John Collins

Framework View

Meredith G. Kline
Henri Blocher
Lee Irons
Mark Futato
Bruce K. Waltke

Cosmic Temple Views

Genesis 1–2 is not about material creation, but God giving function to pre-existing things. Cosmic space is prepared as His temple within which He will rule. This view relies heavily on comparison to Ancient Near East literature.

John H. Walton

Theistic Evolution

God used natural processes (e.g., biological evolution) to create everything (e.g., stars, earth, plants, animals and man) over billions of years.

Many (not all) see Genesis as an allegory and deny a historical Adam and Eve.

Francis Collins

Peter Enns
Tremper Longman
N. T. Wright
Howard J. Van Til
Bruce K. Waltke
BioLogos

Abundantly Entering the Kingdom (2 Pet 1:10-11)

By Ken Yates

I recently did some reading in Church history and one of the things I learned is that 2 Pet 1:10 was often used to teach that a person cannot know if he or she is spiritually saved unless they look at their good works. That is still true today. In this verse, Peter says that his readers should “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (KJV). Only in this way would they experience an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of Christ (v 11).

Many people believe that these verses were written by Peter to tell his readers that the only way they could know if they were children of God is if they diligently

“Our assurance is found in the promise of Jesus Christ, not our works.”

kept working. This implies that Peter doubted the salvation of at least some of his readers, or at least entertained the idea that it was a possibility. If they looked at their lives and did not see these works, or if they stopped doing works in the future, they would have every reason to doubt that they were true believers. It is our works that make our “calling and election sure” and that give us assurance that we are saved.

It is certainly true that, in the context, Peter is speaking about good works. In vv 5-8 Peter tells his readers that they should strive to add to their faith such things as virtue, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. However, even though Peter is speaking about good works, we need to ask if Peter doubts the salvation of some of his readers or if he feels that these good works are needed if one is to be sure they will be in Christ’s

kingdom. There are reasons to conclude that this is not what Peter means.

Peter Does Not Doubt the Salvation of His Readers

It is difficult to see how Peter could have made it any clearer that he considered his readers to be true believers in Jesus Christ. He tells them that they have the same faith as he does (v 1). He asks that grace be “multiplied” to them (v 2). God has given them all things in relation to life and godliness and has called them to glory (v 3). They have escaped the corruption that is in the world (v 4). They are exhorted to add good works to the faith that they *already have* (v 5). Even in v 10 Peter calls them “brethren.”

Of course, many today would say that Peter is simply assuming that his readers are believers. However, Peter cannot say for certain that they are. The only way they can know that they have eternal life is if they do all these works. If virtue, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love are not evident in their lives then the readers should not have assurance. They should lack this assurance even if Peter assumes they are believers for the sake of argument.

But should a Christian look for assurance of salvation in his or her works? Is that what Peter is warning his readers about? Most assuredly it is not.

Assurance of Salvation Is Found in Christ, Not Our Works

When a person believes in Jesus Christ for eternal life, he or she receives it as a free gift at that instant. Our assurance is found in the promise of Jesus Christ, not our works. Even after we believe we continue to sin. If we look at our works, we will always find room to doubt our salvation. We would never have assurance.

The very nature of salvation, that it is a gift by God’s grace (Eph 2:8-9), implies that it is ours even if we abuse God’s grace. A gift, by definition, has no strings attached. God does not give us a gift and then say we must have works to prove we possess it.

Jesus also made it clear that we can know we have eternal life. To the woman at the well, He said if she simply believed in who He was and that He could give



“The believer who is faithful to the Lord will not simply enter into the kingdom of God, he or she will have a very rich entrance. One gets the picture here of a conquering hero.”



THINKSTOCK

her the gift of eternal life, it would be hers (John 4:10). There were no strings attached to the offer. There were no demands that she had to clean up her life first to assure herself that she possessed the gift.

To Martha, at the tomb of Lazarus, He said that He was the Resurrection and the Life. He who believed in Him would rise from the dead if he or she died, and would also have a life that would never end (John 11:25-26). Once again, it is a free offer. Works are not even mentioned.

In 1 John, the Apostle speaks about the gift of eternal life. It is given to all who believe in what God has told us about His Son. The one who believes God's word, that God gives eternal life to all who believe in Christ, have it (1 John 5:9-12). He then says that those who believe *know* they have eternal

life (5:3). They know it because it is based upon the promise of God.

Scripture tells us that if we look to Jesus Christ and His promise of eternal life, we have assurance. If we look anywhere else we will have doubts. We should notice that Peter himself is not saying that if we don't have works we aren't really spiritually saved. In this passage, after he speaks of good works, he says that if his readers lack these things they have forgotten that they had been purged from their sins (2 Pet 1:9). He does not say that if they don't have good works they were not purged from their sins, he says that they have forgotten that they have been forgiven. Even if these readers did not do these good works, they were still forgiven people.

But if Peter is not saying that a person must have good works in order to have assurance, what does he mean?

Making Our Calling and Election Sure

God has called and elected the believer. But the question is: What has He called believers to? One possible answer is that He has called believers to good works. The word for "sure" in v 10 has the basic meaning of valid, consistent, or something that can be relied upon. Peter is telling his believing readers that they are to make their election and calling sure. If God has called believers to good works, then they should be consistent in doing what God has called them to do.

Another option is that Peter is telling his believing readers that they are to do good works in order to validate to others that they are children of God. When believers live godly lives others see Christ in them. It makes their salvation evident before others. While the

WHAT IS GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY?

THE GOSPEL PROMISE was under assault in Paul's time and still is today. How many "Christians" have followed the ancient Galatians in believing they can be saved by a mixture of faith and works?

Grace Evangelical Society (GES) was founded in 1986 to promote the soul-winning truth that God offers man the free gift of everlasting life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from works done before or after the new birth (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35, 47; 11:26).

Another of our aims is to promote Christian growth by emphasizing the Biblical truths about eternal security, assurance, and eternal rewards.

We do this by publishing *Grace in Focus Magazine*, expository books, booklets, and tracts, and the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*. We also hold an annual conference each Spring at Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, TX, and regularly speak at local churches and Bible conferences.

For more information about our ministry please visit

FAITHALONE.ORG

believer knows he or she has eternal life by faith alone in Christ, others "see" that life in our actions.

But what awaits the believer who lives a life of obedience to the Lord? Many have simply assumed that in v 11 Peter only means that such a believer will enter into the kingdom. In the words of many today, such a believer will simply go to heaven. But it is clear that Peter means more than that.

An Abundant Entrance

Peter does not say that the believer who adds good works to his or her faith will *enter* into Christ's kingdom. Instead, he says such a believer will have an *abundant entrance*. The word used for *abundantly* has the basic meaning of "richly." The believer who is faithful to the Lord will not simply enter into the kingdom of God, he or she will have a very rich entrance.

One gets the picture here of a conquering hero. I remember when I was in the military, my unit returned from a short combat tour in Panama. We were the first unit to parachute into combat from our division since World War Two. We had accomplished our mission in that Central American country.

When we returned, we parachuted back into North Carolina. Our friends and family were on the edge of the drop zone waiting for us. When all of us reached the ground, we formed up and marched towards them.

In front of the stands there was a band playing patriotic songs. When we marched over a hill into view of our families and friends, they burst into applause. Television cameras were everywhere. The unit had returned as conquering soldiers.

That is the picture Peter paints of the obedient believer's entrance into

the kingdom. While every believer will *enter* into that kingdom, the faithful obedient believer will experience an *abundant* entrance. One can picture the Lord saying to such a believer, "Well done."

Conclusion

Peter does not doubt the eternal salvation of his readers. Neither does he tell them to find assurance of their salvation in good works. But he does exhort and warn them.

He urges them to add good works to their faith. This will allow others to see Christ at work in them. In addition, such a life will result in an entrance into the kingdom that can be compared to a conquering hero. It is easy to see the difference at the Judgment Seat of Christ between a disobedient and obedient believer. The former will experience the loss of rewards and shame. The latter will have a "rich" experience of eternal rewards and the commendation of the Lord.

Implied in all of this, of course, is a warning. Believers are warned about the possibility of living a life that dishonors the Lord. Such a life is one lived by somebody who has forgotten that Christ has forgiven him. Such a life is one that does not manifest the righteousness of God to others. Such a life will result in a shameful entrance into the kingdom. Even though such believers have eternal life, this is a very serious warning indeed. **GE**

Ken Yates is the Editor of the Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society.



Is *Joseph Prince* "Free Grace"?

By Shawn Lazar

My very first phone call on my very first day of work at GES was from a lady asking about Joseph Prince. "Do you preach the same message he does?" she asked. If we did, she wanted to begin donating to the ministry.

Talk about pressure!

Unfortunately, I had to tell her the truth, i.e., I had never heard of Joseph Prince. And when I asked around the office, neither had anyone else.

So I quickly googled his name and saw that he was a Pentecostal prosperity preacher and mega-church pastor from Singapore.

That didn't bode well for me.

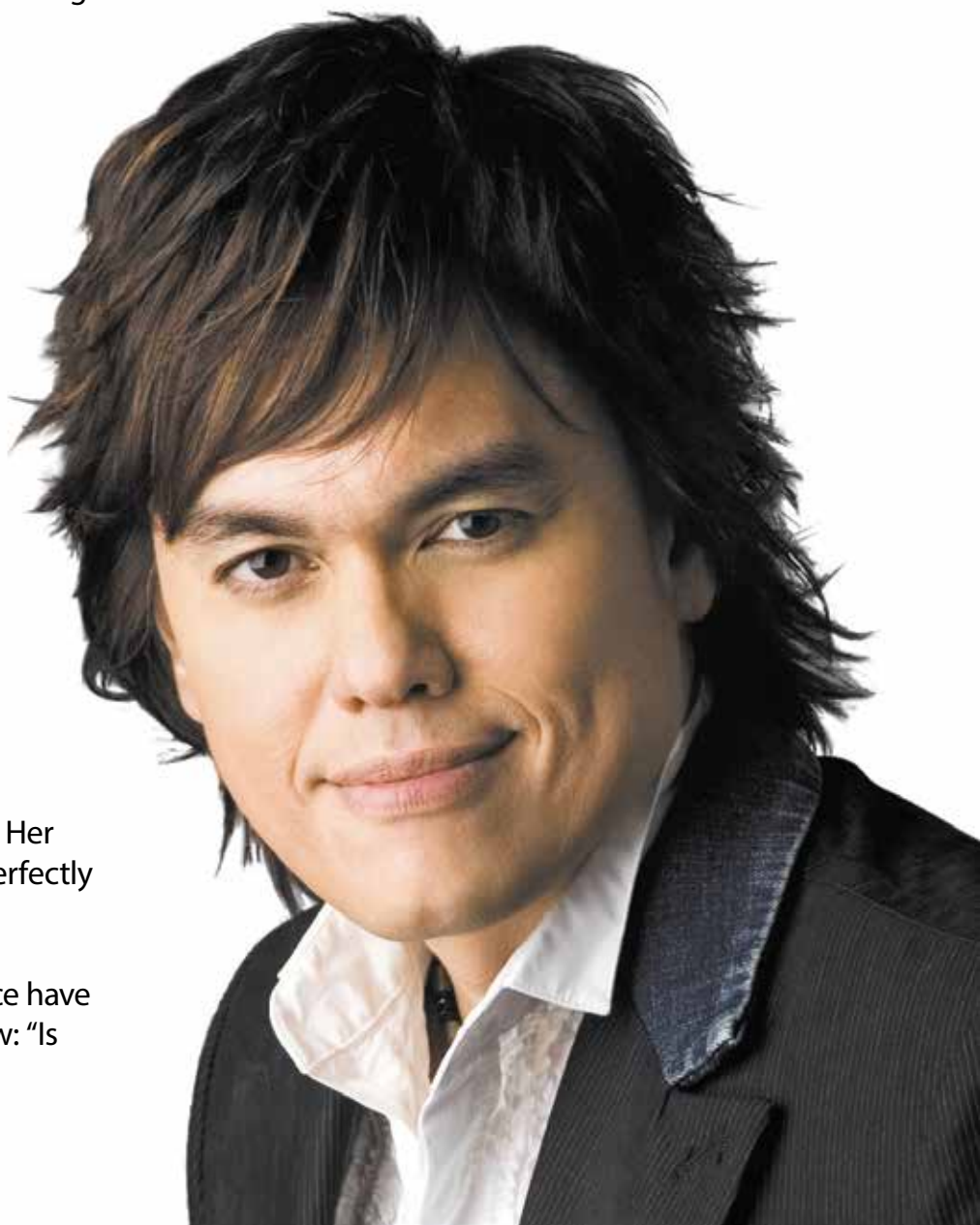
So I told the lady that while I couldn't say whether we preached the same message of grace as Prince, GES did not promote a health and wealth gospel.

That didn't bode well for her.

We talked a little bit about that and the conversation went poorly. Her last words to me were, "Well I'm perfectly healthy and I drive a Mercedes!"

Click. She hung up.

Since then questions about Prince have increased. Everyone wants to know: "Is Joseph Prince 'Free Grace'?"



Here's what Prince himself warned: "Don't be too easily impressed just because someone tells you that he preaches grace. The Word of God tells us to test everything" (*Destined to Reign*, p. 32).

Wise words.

Everyone preaches grace. But what do they mean by it? And do they mean what the Bible means?

After having read two of Joseph Prince's books, namely *Destined to Reign: The Secret to Effortless Success, Wholeness and Victorious Living*, and *Unmerited Favor: Your Supernatural Advantage for a Successful Life*, here is what I've found.

Who Is Joseph Prince?

Joseph Prince was born to a Chinese mother and a father whom he described as "an often drunk Sikh priest." Prince's birth name was Xenonamandar Jegahusiee Singh, but he changed it to the more pronounceable Joseph Prince during his early career as an IT consultant.

Prince was one of the founders of New Creation Church in Singapore and eventually became its senior pastor. New Creation Church has since become one of the largest in Asia, with 31,000 members. Prince's English-language program, *Destined to Reign*, is broadcast in 200 countries, including the US, and with appearances at Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church, and at Hillsong Church in Sydney, Australia, his influence is continuing to grow.

First Impressions

Admittedly, my first impressions of Prince were not good.

Both books feature prominent portraits of him on the cover, where, quite frankly, Prince looks like a campy Asian pop star. My



"I began to wonder, 'Is Joseph Prince actually a *sheep* in wolf's clothing?'"

first thought was, "This is an obvious wolf in wolf's clothing."

However, you know what they say about judging a book by its cover...

The more I read about what Prince says about grace and about what one must do (or not do!) to be eternally saved, the more I began to wonder, "Is Joseph Prince actually a *sheep* in wolf's clothing? Did a grace preacher sneak into the prosperity crowd?"

Now, I don't want to minimize the fact that Prince is charismatic and preaches a prosperity message. Some *Grace in Focus* readers will take strong exception to both those beliefs, and we'll address them in future issues. But for now, let's put those concerns to one side and concentrate on understanding what Prince teaches about the message of life. What must we do to be eternally saved?

Destined to Reign through Justification

Destined to Reign and *Unmerited Favor* are both about the prosperity that Prince says God desires to give all of His children. However, Prince's main contention is that prosperity is given by faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from our works. That message is what has caught the attention of so many Free Grace readers.

The title of *Destined to Reign* comes from a statement made by Paul in Rom 5:17. There Paul said that believers can "*reign in life* through the One, Jesus Christ" (emphasis added). Prince understands *reigning in life* to mean living a life of "kingly dominion over all your challenges and circumstances" in the here and now (*Destined to Reign*, p. 2).

However, Prince teaches that we cannot *earn* God's blessings of

prosperity. We can only believe in and rely upon Christ's finished work, and then the prosperity will come.

Although the "effortless success" promised in the subtitle suggests a "get-rich-quick" scheme, the real reason why Prince says that success should be "effortless" is because it is not based on our legalistic struggles at self-improvement. Success comes by simply believing in Christ's perfect righteousness. Resting in that truth leads to victorious living (*Destined to Reign*, p. 243). That isn't a typical prosperity message.

Success Through God's Unmerited Favor

Unmerited Favor continues the same theme as *Destined to Reign*. It is loosely structured as a meditation on the life of Joseph in Egypt, who, despite undergoing a series of severe hardships, the Bible says was a "successful man" (Gen 39:1-2).

So how was Joseph "successful"? He was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery! He certainly wasn't a success based on his circumstances.

According to Prince, he was a success because of his relationship with God. "From Genesis 39:2, it is clear that success is not *what* you have, but rather *who* you have!" (*Unmerited Favor*, p. 3). Joseph was a success, not because of his circumstances, but because God's unmerited favor was given to him. Hence the title, *Unmerited Favor*. Prince prefers the term "unmerited favor" to "grace" because it clearly communicates that God's favor is not earned by our works.

Prince argues that believers are already successful because of what Christ has done for them, and not because of what we have accomplished for ourselves. He warns his

readers against religious systems that teach us to merit God's favor through works. Instead, the basis of our success is to realize that we "have been made the righteousness of God through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross" (*Unmerited Favor*, p. 69). He continues by explaining that "Christianity is not about *doing right* to become righteous. It is all about *believing right* in Jesus to become righteous" (*Unmerited Favor*, 69-70). According to Prince,

"The true solution to immorality and nominalism, says Prince, is not to preach the law, but preaching the grace of God."

success comes from always resting in the truth that we are made righteous by faith, through faith in the Lord Jesus, apart from our works.

Is Grace a License to Sin?

Joseph Prince is well aware of the objection that a radical grace message will lead to greater licentiousness in the churches. He doesn't use the term "Lordship Salvation," but he is clearly familiar with that kind of theology.

Prince acknowledges that some preachers think the answer to immorality and nominalism is to preach more law and repentance. But Prince believes that's deeply mistaken (*Destined to Reign*, pp. 232-33, 249). Preaching the law only exacerbates the situation. As Paul taught, not only does the law not stop sin, it

actually serves to provoke it (Rom 5:20).

The true solution to immorality and nominalism, says Prince, is not to preach the law, but preaching the grace of God (*Destined to Reign*, p. 30). It is God's goodness, not His wrath, that leads people to repent: "What produces true repentance—the fear of judgment or His unconditional grace?" (*Destined to Reign*, p. 229). The answer is *grace*.

In addressing the issue of young people drifting from the faith, Prince says that the way to help young people grow is not to preach the law to them, but grace: "Only grace can transform our young people. Throwing laws at them will only stir up their flesh to rebel. But just one encounter with Jesus, just one drop of His unmerited favor, and I can guarantee you, our young people will never be the same again" (*Unmerited Favor*, 147).

Prince appeals to the story of the immoral woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears as proof that Christ's total forgiveness does not produce a license to sin, but produces love for the forgiver: "the most 'dangerous' thing about this doctrine of complete forgiveness of sins is that you will fall in love with Jesus and end up effortlessly fulfilling the greatest commandment" to love God (*Unmerited Favor*, 194).

Victorious living only happens once we understand that Jesus has paid it all, and that we are perfected forever in Christ (*Destined to Reign*, p. 179-186). We begin to grow as our mind is transformed by this astounding Biblical truth: "When you believe that you are righteous even when you sin, your thoughts and actions will come in alignment with your believing" (*Destined to Reign*, p. 245). And when they do,

we'll stop being slaves to sin in our experience.

God Wants You To Have Assurance

Although Prince does not explicitly say that assurance of our eternal security is of the essence of saving faith, he does believe that eternal security is true, and that being assured of our security is essential to growth in Christ. In a passage that evokes at once the truth of eternal security, the possibility of failure in the Christian life, and the importance of assurance of salvation, Prince writes:

God does not leave you wondering whether you are saved or not. He tells you outright that you are His and that nothing can ever separate you from the love of Christ. Not even sin because His blood is greater than your sin! Knowing that all your sins are forgiven is crucial for your health, peace of mind, wholeness and wellness (*Destined to Reign*, p. 95).

“God does not leave you wondering.” This emphasis on eternal security has led to criticisms of Prince from within the Pentecostal movement, which is largely Arminian and teaches the possibility of losing one's eternal salvation.¹ But Prince continues to preach it.

Areas of Disagreement

Although *Grace in Focus* readers will find much to appreciate in *Destined to Reign* and *Unmerited Favor*, there are some areas of disagreement which I will briefly mention here.

First, as was mentioned before, Prince supports a prosperity message. He recognizes his “roots” in the Word of Faith movement (*Destined to Reign*, p. 271), but implies

that many Word of Faith churches are infected with legalism, particularly in turning faith into a work (*Destined to Reign*, p. 271).

Second, Prince denies God's temporal wrath or judgment upon sin. He denies that God ever punishes Christians for anything: “One of

“God does not leave you wondering whether you are saved or not. He tells you outright that you are His and that nothing can ever separate you from the love of Christ.”

the most evil teachings that I have heard is that God will chastise His own with sicknesses, diseases, accidents and tragedies” (p. 63). It isn't clear how he deals with the warning passages of Scripture.

Third, Prince doesn't distinguish between positional forgiveness in Christ and fellowship forgiveness. He denies that there is ever a break in fellowship between the believer and God.

Fourth, there are many areas where Prince could have been clearer on the message of life. Though there is no question that he believes that we are justified by faith in Christ apart from works and that we are eternally secure at the moment of faith, he doesn't say that belief in the eternity of the gift is of the essence of saving faith.

Conclusion

So, to return to our original question, is Joseph Prince “Free Grace”?

We have a saying in the office. When we come across a theologian who is outside the typical Free Grace circles, who may not know all of the issues that we have debated, and who may not be entirely consistent in their thinking, but who seems to be teaching things similar to us about the message of life, we say, “He's basically with us.”

It's an expression of *hope*, not of *certainty*.

And I think it applies to Joseph Prince.

Admittedly, I don't know how consistent he is in his beliefs. I don't know where he'd fall given a specific Free Grace question. But given what he says about God's grace, I would say he is *basically* with us.

That opens up a great opportunity for outreach.

Fans of Joseph Prince will probably be open to reading Free Grace materials. If you know someone like that, why not point them to our website, or give them a copy of this magazine? If God's free grace is what they're hungry for, very few resources will do a better job of putting it into focus. ■

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1. See Joseph Mattera, “Is Joseph Prince's Radical Grace Teaching Biblical?” <http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/40943-is-joseph-prince-s-radical-grace-teaching-biblical>



Questions & Answers

Question: Is telling someone that they need to *entrust themselves to Jesus for everlasting life* a good way of conveying what it means to believe in Jesus (*pisteuō eis auton*)?

Answer: No, it is not. The Greek verb *pisteuō* does occasionally mean *entrust* or *commit*. See, for example, John 2:24. The Lord Jesus did not entrust Himself to new believers who were unwilling to confess Him publicly as Messiah.

However, in all those contexts the issue is not *believing*, but a *commitment* to someone else. Thus if we use the sense of *entrusting*, we are using the language of commitment salvation, also called, Lordship Salvation.

When the Lord Jesus asked Martha in John 11:26, “Do you believe this?” He was not asking her, “Do you entrust yourself to this?” Instead, He was asking, “Are you persuaded that what I’ve said is true?” In context He was asking if she was convinced that He guarantees bodily resurrection and everlasting life that can never be lost to all who believe in Him.

Many well-meaning people like to say that *trust* or *entrust* conveys a better sense of what saving faith (*pisteuō eis* in Greek) is. For example, one author writes,

What is faith? The Greek word has two basic elements: mental assent and reliance. These two elements assume a third, knowledge. Thus, faith consists of knowledge, mental assent, and reliance.¹

So in this view it is not enough to be convinced that by virtue of His death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ guarantees everlasting life to all who believe in Him. Those are the two first elements, knowledge and mental assent/belief. The third element, trust or reliance, must be added.

That same author goes on to illustrate what reliance/trust is:

A truck driver may believe the bridge is safe, but he does not believe in the biblical sense until he drives onto the bridge. A person may believe the elevator will carry him to the top of the building, but he does not believe in the New Testament sense until he steps into it. A person with his clothes on fire may

believe that the swimming pool will save him, but he is not saved until he dives into the pool. Faith is acceptance plus reliance.²

Therein is the rub. How does one drive onto the bridge that is Jesus? How does one get into the elevator of salvation? How does one jump into the pool of everlasting life?

Notice that the author specifically says that believing is not enough in all three illustrations.

It is confusing to say that believing in Jesus for everlasting life is not enough to be born again. In this view it takes “acceptance [what the author calls belief] plus reliance.” Faith alone will not save anyone.

That, however, is a direct contradiction of John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-27; Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8-9; and Rev 22:17, to name just a few passages that indicate that belief in Jesus is the only requirement of everlasting life.

I do not mean to step on anyone’s toes. During my four years on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ (1974-1978), I myself used the chair illustration and the Blondell tightrope illustration, both of which are saying the same thing as the bridge, elevator, and pool illustrations. But in seminary I came to see that there is no additional step besides believing in Jesus for what He promises (everlasting life). Once a person believes Him for everlasting life, he has it. There is no additional step of getting into the chair, elevator, airplane, lifeboat, or whatever.

There are, by the way, inspired illustrations of saving faith. They are found in the Bible. The Lord Jesus illustrated saving faith as being like drinking living water or eating the bread of life. You drink living water by believing in Jesus as John 6:35 specifically says, (“He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst”). Those illustrations do not suggest some additional step is needed beyond believing Him for the promise.

I hope that helps. ■■■

—Bob

1. G. Michael Cocoris, *Evangelism: A Biblical Approach* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1984), p. 74. In this book, Cocoris argues for the free gift of everlasting life. However, in my opinion, on this issue, he introduces a point of confusion about what faith is.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

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