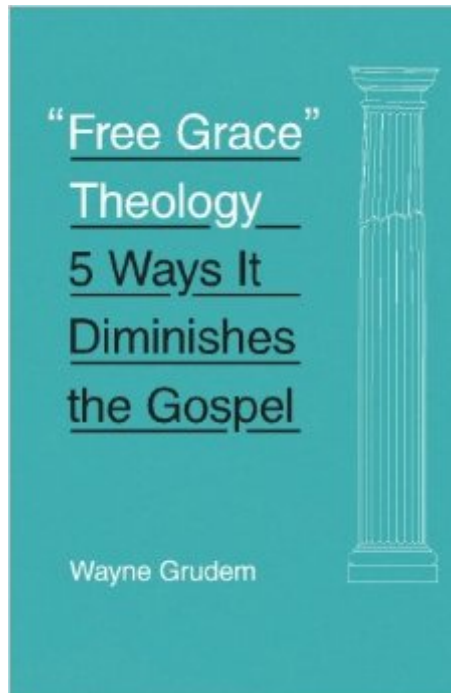


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# "Free Grace" Theology: 5 Ways It Diminishes The Gospel



## Synopsis

Must the gospel message include a call for people to repent of their sins? • No, say Free Grace advocates. Is evidence of a changed life an important indication of whether a person is truly born again? • No, again, these advocates say. But in this book, Wayne Grudem shows how the Bible answers • Yes • to both of these questions, arguing that the Free Grace movement contradicts both historic Protestant teaching and the New Testament itself. This important book explains the true nature of the Christian gospel and answers the question asked by so many people: • How can I know that I'm saved? •

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Wayne Grudem is best known for his prolific Systematic Theology. It has helped make theology approachable and enjoyable for the Christian laymen. With his "Free Grace Theology" 5 Ways it Diminishes the Gospel, Grudem intends to demonstrate that the claims of Free Grace Theology is not faithful to the Bible's teaching on saving faith. The book is short, only being 160 pages. It is made up of an introduction and five chapters, and a conclusion. Introduction 1: Not the • Faith Alone • of the Reformation 2: No Call to Repent from Sin 3: False Assurance 4: Under-emphasis on Trust in the Person of Christ 5: Unlikely Interpretations Conclusion In his introduction, Grudem helpfully defines the debate around the issues of utmost importance. He is not interested in fighting for the label of • lordship salvation • as this is a loaded term used by Free Grace Theologians against the historic protestant position. The debate should not revolve around loaded terms, instead both theological positions should be examined with Scripture on two

major points: 1) Whether repentance is necessary for saving faith, and 2) the nature of good works in the Christian life. Following the introduction, Grudem lays out his case against Free Grace Theology in five ways (as the book title reveals). First, he begins with historical theology—reciting what has been classic Christian consensus. Free Grace Advocates, Grudem reveals, fundamentally misunderstand sola fide—faith alone. For them, this means faith is all that is required for salvation. Christian consensus, however, has always taught that we are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone. In other words, saving faith must have accompanying works and fruit that demonstrate a changed life or that faith is a dead faith (James 2:14-26). In his survey, Grudem cites John Calvin (1509-1564), the Formula of Concord (1576), the 39 Articles of the Church of England (1571), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), the New Hampshire Baptist Confession (1833), John Wesley (1703-1791), and the Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truths (1916). Historically, the consensus among different significant figures, denominations and time is undeniable—the historic protestant position is at odds with Free Grace Theology. Second, Grudem challenges the errant definition of repentance as being only a change of mind. Third, he summarizes the dangerous consequences of teaching a salvation invitation that does not include the need to repent—it creates false converts. These individuals have an intellectual knowledge of Christ, but nothing more. Fourth, Grudem identifies Free Grace Theology's tendency to actually diminish the person of Christ. Finally, Grudem closes his work by exposing and countering the exegetically unwarranted interpretations offered by Free Grace Theologians on texts which contradict their position. Free Grace Theology has profoundly, negatively, impacted many individual's understanding of the nature of saving faith. Most damaging (in my opinion) is its enabling of individuals to have assurance that they are truly saved while they continue to live in their sin. Free Grace Theology has no doubt created the "converts" of the chilling text Matthew 7:21-23—Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? 23 And then will I declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Wayne Grudem set out to write a critique of Free Grace Theology and demonstrate how it diminishes the Gospel. He has succeeded. He writes clearly, and kindly while not compromising the Gospel. My own experience with Free Grace Theology began in my teens with theological controversy in my youth group. I have been surprised to see easy believism continue to surface throughout my life at revival meetings, teen camps, Christian college, seminary, and in local churches. I am grateful for

Grudem's work and intend to recommend it along with John MacArthur's classic *The Gospel According to Jesus* to those struggling with the nature of saving faith. Grudem has once again enriched the church with another timely volume. This review originally appeared at: [...]

Wayne Grudem argues against "Free Grace" theology in his newest book. Wayne A. Grudem clearly defines what 'free grace' theology is. (At least as he understands it.) After having established what the phrase means, he then seeks to show how it differs from the historic Protestant position. He then proceeds to illustrate the weaknesses this theology can lead to in real life. In other words, why believing rightly matters in the first place. He makes a few strong statements in this one. First, he is NOT saying that those who hold to 'free grace theology' are unsaved heathens. He is NOT saying that they are false preachers in danger of hell. Second, he is NOT continuing the "lordship salvation" debate from several decades ago. This fact he INSISTS on. His book is different. (He sees that argument as going nowhere.) In particular, the "free grace" he's attacking is the position held by Zane Hodges and his followers. Essentially he is writing the book because he feels that "free grace" theology is dangerous. It is dangerous for several reasons. First, because it reinterprets the "faith alone" of the Protestant Reformation to mean something completely opposite from how it was intended. Second, because it reinterprets, misinterprets many Scripture verses in trying to make its own case. Third, he feels that the "free grace" movement completely neglects repentance. Preachers and teachers--anyone and everyone who shares the gospel, formally or informally--need to agree with what the Bible says about repentance. Whether people neglect repentance because they are worried it will make them unpopular OR because they feel that it's completely unnecessary to a believer makes no difference in the end. Why does it matter? Well, that leads to an additional reason for concern: assurance and false assurance. If repentance is optional, AND, sanctification (holy living) is optional, then what your assurance is based on is often a one-time profession of faith. (Perhaps coming forward to an altar, perhaps being led in a prayer, perhaps being confirmed in a church, or even baptized). The "free grace" view, he argues, says "Don't worry, you're saved. Nothing matters but that one moment when you were justified." Last (but not least), Grudem argues that "free grace" advocates emphasizes FACTS about Jesus and never Jesus himself. Believe this, this, this about Jesus and YOU ARE SAVED as opposed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Grudem argues that repentance is a sign that you have the faith you profess to have. That without repentance, there is no outward, visible sign that you've been justified by God. Same with sanctification. To be saved is to be MADE (by God) into a NEW CREATION. To be saved is to PUT OFF THE OLD, and put on the new. To be saved is to LIVE BY THE SPIRIT, to WALK IN THE

SPIRIT. It isn't that "justified" people never, ever, ever sin....it is that when we sin--not ever "if" we sin--we are grieved by that sin. One thing that could have used slight clarification is his position on repentance and conversion. I believe that Scripture teaches that we are lost, blind, dead--unable and unwilling to repent. The Spirit converts the soul, "breathes life" where there was once death, makes us born again. After this conversion, after this new birth, then that is where repentance enters in. It is the Holy Spirit who shows us our sin, how ugly and grievous it is. Not just "sin" in general, but OUR sins specifically. Our need for a Savior becomes crushingly overwhelming in that moment. It brings us to our knees--literally or not. Grace is only properly seen when it's viewed in light of what we actually deserved and what we've been given instead. Until you feel like you've deserved hell, then grace will never be amazing. Repentance is not optional, in my opinion--or his. Because it is like a baby's first cry. Can a baby be born alive and never once cry????? No, that first repentance is just the first of many times when we will cry out our sins to God and ask for forgiveness. Since so many people are confused about the order of things, perhaps thinking that repentance is the first step to being born again, I thought the book could have used this opportunity to clarify things. Repentance is impossible--at least true repentance--without the Spirit having acted on us first. (Like there's a difference between being genuinely sorry, and just sorry that you got caught and are having to deal with the messiness of being caught.) I am also giving the author the benefit of the doubt in another area. Based on the arrangement of the chapters, one could wrongly assume that the author places equal weight--or authority--on the historic Protestant position as affirmed in the writings of Luther, Calvin, etc. as he does on Scripture. I do not believe this to be true...at all. But he doesn't really give Scripture proper attention until later chapters. Did I love this one? I'm not sure I did. I liked it and I definitely found it thought-provoking. I was unfamiliar with the "Free Grace" position before reading this book.

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