

DISPENSATIONALISM AND FREE GRACE: INTIMATELY LINKED, PART 3

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the first article of this series, I advanced the position that proponents of Lordship Salvation have considered normative Dispensationalism to be the root cause of Free Grace Theology (which they view as an aberration). In the second, I showed how certain anti-Dispensational views have led proponents of Lordship Salvation to abandon literal hermeneutics with respect to key passages in the debate over soteriology. My goal was to contend for the point that Lordship Salvation cannot be consistently maintained without departing from certain key aspects of Dispensationalism. In this final article, I will turn the focus onto Dispensationalism itself and the soteriology which it bore—namely, Free Grace. My hope is to demonstrate first the historical linkage¹ between the two, second the theological linkage, and third, to offer some practical applications for those who hold to both Dispensationalism and Free Grace.

¹ Many Dispensational distinctives were held by the early church fathers, and some aspects can be found in Protestant writers as far back as the early 17th century. However, this article will be limited to the discussion of Dispensationalism after it was formerly systematized by J.N. Darby (around 1828).

II. DISPENSATIONALISM AND FREE GRACE: HISTORICALLY LINKED

John MacArthur has argued that Free Grace theology finds its roots in Lewis Sperry Chafer's Dispensationalism.² It is fair to say that Chafer, with the founding of Dallas Theological Seminary and with the writing of *He That Is Spiritual*,³ *Grace: An Exposition of God's Marvelous Gift*,⁴ and his *Systematic Theology*,⁵ had a profound impact on the development of Free Grace theology. It is also true, however, that as Dispensationalism predates him in English and American theology, so does Free Grace. Because this topic could fill volumes, and because space is limited, the Free Grace writings of the early Dispensationalists will be only briefly surveyed.

Dispensationalism arose from Calvinistic theologians. The Brethren Dispensationalists such as J. N. Darby, C. H. Mackintosh, and William Kelley, and the Presbyterian and Congregationalist Dispensationalists such as James Hall Brookes, C. I. Scofield, and L. S. Chafer were all Calvinists of a sort, though the idea of Limited Atonement was not apparently held by any of them. Despite this, they did not entirely break from Calvinism and all held to a soft view of the Perseverance of the Saints, namely, that all true believers would have at least some change and works in their lives.

But in addition to Dispensationalism itself, two significant developments came through these Dispensational Calvinists.

²“Who are the defenders of no-lordship dispensationalism? Nearly all of them stand in a tradition that has its roots in the teaching of Lewis Sperry Chafer. I will show in Appendix 2 that Dr. Chafer is the father of modern no-lordship teaching. Every prominent figure on the no-lordship side descends from Dr. Chafer's spiritual lineage. Though Dr. Chafer did not invent or originate any of the key elements of no-lordship teaching, he codified the system of dispensationalism on which all contemporary no-lordship doctrine is founded. That system is the common link between those who attempt to defend no-lordship doctrine on theological grounds.” John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to the Apostles*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), p. 35.

³Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1918, 1967, 1983).

⁴Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace: An Exposition of God's Marvelous Gift* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1922, 1972).

⁵Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948).

First, they brought to the forefront doctrines other than soteriology (especially eschatology and ecclesiology). Second, they adamantly warned against looking to works for assurance.⁶

A. BRINGING TO THE FOREFRONT DOCTRINES OTHER THAN SOTERIOLOGY

Regarding the first point, C. H. Mackintosh's short essay, "Calvinism and Arminianism: One Sided Theology" is representative of the Dispensational sentiment of his day. In it he argues that while he believes the five points of Calvinism to be true, they by no means consist of the whole counsel of God. He writes:

We believe these five points, so far as they go;⁷ but they are very far indeed from containing the faith of God's elect. There are wide fields of divine revelation which this stunted and one-

⁶ Regarding this latter point, it has been noted by many that John Calvin also taught assurance apart from works. However, due to the combination of his doctrine of Perseverance with double predestination and Federal Theology, this concept fell away in Calvinistic circles shortly after Calvin. That one could have assurance based upon the promises of Christ alone without examination of his or her works was largely (there were a few exceptions) absent from theological discourse in the 17th through 19th centuries. By contrast, Dispensationalist teachers vigorously argued that assurance based upon the promises of Christ alone was essential to the Christian life. For the early roots of the view that assurance comes through careful consideration of one's works, see R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), and M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985).

⁷ Later in the same article Mackintosh seems to repudiate Limited Atonement. In addition, in an essay entitled, "God For Us," he wrote, "When we have from the lips of our blessed Lord Himself, the eternal Son of God, such words as these, 'God so loved *the world*,' we have no ground whatever for questioning their application to each and all who come under the comprehensive word 'world.' Before any one can prove that the free love of God does not apply to him, he must first prove that he does not form a part of the world, but that he belongs to some other sphere of being. If indeed our Lord had said, 'God so loved a certain portion of the world,' call it what you please, then verily it would be absolutely necessary to prove that we belong to that particular portion or class, ere we could attempt to apply His words to ourselves. If He had said that God so loved the predestinated, the elect, or the called, then we must seek to know our place amongst the number of such, before we can take home to ourselves the precious assurance of the love of God, as proved by the gift of His Son. But our Lord used no such qualifying clause." *The Mackintosh Treasury: Miscellaneous Writings by C.H. Mackintosh* (Sunbury, PA: Believers Bookshelf Inc., 1999), 607. Emphasis his. Clearly, Mackintosh rejected Limited Atonement.

sided system does not touch upon, or even hint at, in the most remote manner. Where do we find the heavenly calling? Where, the precious sanctifying hope of the coming of Christ to receive His people to Himself? Where have we the grand scope of prophecy opened to the vision of our souls, in that which is so pompously styled “the faith of God’s elect”?⁸

Mackintosh further observes that obsession with the doctrines of Calvinism (or with Arminianism for that matter) leads to a stunted spirituality:

Nothing is more damaging to the truth of God, more withering to the soul, or more subversive of all spiritual growth and progress than mere theology, high or low—Calvinistic or Arminian. It is impossible for the soul to make progress beyond the boundaries of the system to which it is attached. If I am taught to regard “the five points” as “the faith of God’s elect,” I shall not think of looking beyond them; and then a most glorious field of heavenly truth is shut out from the vision of my soul. I am stunted, narrowed, one-sided; and I am in danger of getting into that hard, dry state of soul which results from being occupied with mere points of doctrine instead of with Christ.⁹

While Mackintosh is not directly commenting on Covenant Theology’s soteriological view of history, the fact that he had broken free from it gave him the perspective to properly place soteriology in its rightful place as one of many glorious doctrines expressed in Scripture. As I argued in Part 2 of this series, this lays the foundation for rightly interpreting large portions of the Bible as non-soteriological and paves the way for distinguishing justification from sanctification and the free gift from reward.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid., 605.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ This last point was the cornerstone of Robert Govett’s (1813-1901) ministry and continued with those whom he influenced, including D. M. Panton, Watchman Nee, and G. H. Lang. Likewise, Chafer did devote some pages to discussion of the Bema in *Systematic Theology*, vol. III, 307-309, vol. IV, 396, 404-406, and vol VII, 296. However, the Judgment Seat of Christ to determine reward was somewhat absent from the Plymouth Brethren and

B. ASSURANCE WITHOUT INTROSPECTION

In sharp contrast to the non-Dispensationalists, the belief that assurance should be found in looking to Christ and His promises alone and never to works was nearly universally held among the early Dispensationalists. And some of them argued vigorously for it. Some extended quotes are necessary to demonstrate how forcefully these Dispensationalists expounded this belief.

Darby presented faith and the peace (assurance) which it brings as properly resting on God's word, not on experience:

In real communion the conscience must be purged; there can be no communion if the soul be not at peace. We read here, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." There is very frequently the confounding of what faith produces with what faith rests upon. Faith always rests upon God's estimate of the blood of Jesus as He has revealed it in His word: faith rests on no experience.¹¹

Mackintosh takes this further, arguing that looking to works for assurance is not even Christianity:

The Spirit of God never leads any one to build upon His work as the ground of peace, but only upon the finished work of Christ, and the unchangeable word of God; and we may rest assured that the more simply we rest on these the more settled our peace will be, and the clearer our evidences, the brighter our frames, the happier our feelings, the richer our experiences.

In short, the more we look away from self and all its belongings, and rest in Christ, on the clear authority of scripture, the more spiritually minded we shall be; and the inspired apostle tells us that "to be spiritually minded (or, the minding

Presbyterian Dispensationalists, and did not become heavily influential in mainstream American Free Grace Theology until Zane Hodges. See below.

¹¹J. N. Darby, "No More Conscience of Sins." Available online at <http://www.stempublishing.com/authors/darby/EVANGEL/12018E.html>. Last accessed March 1, 2012. See also Darby, "The True Grace of God in Which You Stand," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Autumn, 1995): 69-73.

of the Spirit) is life and peace.” The best evidence of a spiritual mind is child-like repose in Christ and His word. The clearest proof of an unspiritual mind is self-occupation. It is a poor affair to be trafficking in *our* evidences, or *our* anything. It looks like piety, but it leads away from Christ—away from scripture—away from God; and this is not piety, or faith, or Christianity.¹²

Thus, from the earliest days of systematized Dispensationalism, a Free Grace view of assurance was already strongly represented and had near universal acceptance. This is continued by Dispensationalists even today.

James Hall Brookes, who has been called the “father of American dispensationalism,”¹³ makes perhaps an even more robust defense of the freeness of eternal life and assurance through Christ’s promises alone. His work, *Salvation: The Way Made Plain*, devotes 362 pages to the topic¹⁴ (the rest of the book expresses the impossibility of man earning salvation through works) and argues for the believer’s right to absolute assurance apart from works from many different angles. For example:

It is my earnest desire and effort to turn your thoughts entirely away from yourself to the Saviour, for it is the most melancholy business that can engage even a redeemed sinner to be probing into his own soul to find some assurance

¹² Mackintosh, “The Christian: His Position and His Work,” *The Mackintosh Treasury*, 670, emphasis his.

¹³ “Perhaps the father of American dispensationalism was James Brookes... Brookes wrote the book *Maranatha*, which achieved wide distribution as it popularized a dispensational view of prophecy... Perhaps Brookes will best be remembered as the one who introduced C.I. Scofield to Dispensationalism shortly after his conversion.” Thomas Ice, “A Short History of Dispensationalism, Part III” *Dispensational Distinctives* (May-Jun 1991), 1. Scofield said of Brookes, “During the last twenty years of his life Dr. Brookes was perhaps my most intimate friend, and to him I am indebted more than to all other men in the world for the establishment of my faith.” Ernest Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism* Historical Series no. 10 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1968), 223. As quoted by Larry Crutchfield *The Origins of Dispensationalism: The Darby Factor* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc.) 17. Italics supplied by Crutchfield.

¹⁴ James Hall Brookes, *Salvation: The Way Made Plain* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1871), 123-484. Available online at <http://books.google.com/books?id=aRgHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Last accessed Mar 1, 2012.

that he is saved. You can never find it there, but only in the word; and, thank God! having once seen it in the word, you can see it every day and every hour, and as often as you read and believe what Jesus says. Nor is this assurance the privilege exclusively of ministers or of a favoured few who have made higher attainments in holiness than the common crowd can ever hope to reach, but it is the privilege of every one without exception who believes the testimony of God's word addressed alike to all.¹⁵

Illustrating the distinctiveness of the Dispensational position on this issue, Brookes commented on the profound difference between the lack of assurance that was prevalent in his day and what he saw in the New Testament:

[T]here is abundant proof that [the believers to whom the NT epistles were written] were strangers to the fear and uncertainty that make up the gloomy experience of at least nine-tenths of the people of God in modern times. Whoever they were, whatever they had been, wherever they lived, they had an assurance of salvation which must have formed at once an unfailing fountain of joy to their hearts and an effective instrument for achieving an easy victory over the world.¹⁶

Examples such as these could be multiplied in this work. Likewise, other early Dispensationalists, Robert Govett, C. I. Scofield,¹⁷ D. M. Panton, and to a lesser extent, William Kelly, shared this view. The near uniformity on this issue among Dispensationalists is especially noteworthy because Dispensationalism spread as a grassroots movement, mostly in

¹⁵ Ibid., 445.

¹⁶ Ibid., 283.

¹⁷ Space does not permit a proper treatment of the significance of the *Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909), but it should be noted that it was instrumental in the grassroots rise of Dispensationalism and was for many the first exposure to the sharp distinction between law and grace (see note on John 1:17), the idea that James 2:14-26 was discussing justification before men (see note on Jas 2:24), and the idea that the Sermon on the Mount was a manifesto for the Messianic Kingdom intended in primary application to the Jews (see note on Matt 5:2).

independent churches, and without a top-down structure. Even those who might be styled leaders of the movement, rather than developing creeds and confessions, implored everyone to look only to Scripture to determine truth. For example, Darby said:

This is what I would press and urge upon every one: to apply themselves, for themselves, to the testimony of Scripture, to draw ideas simply and directly from this (and I can assure them, they will ever find them sanctifying ideas) but trust no man's mind, whether millenarian or amillenarian.¹⁸

Historically, Dispensationalism has been essentially Free Grace from the beginning. The scope of this article does not permit laying out the soteriology of the popular non-Dispensationalists of the 19th century in order to show the contrast between it and the soteriology of these Dispensationalists. However, even a brief survey of the theological works of the time would reveal a sharp contrast to what you have seen above. In the midst of legalistic gloom, Dispensationalism provided a floodlight of grace and assurance to all who had eyes to see.

Chafer did not alone revive Free Grace theology. He merely picked up where the Dispensationalists before him had left off and increased its popularity through his writings and the establishment of DTS.

The view expressed above by Mackintosh and Brookes that assurance is the foundation of a holy walk was also the cornerstone of Chafer's teaching on the spiritual life. For example, in the first lesson of his series of lectures on the Christian Life addressed to DTS students, Chafer said:

Now honestly look into your heart. Has that been the motive in your Christian life, that you have lived the best you could because you were set right, or did you live the best you could hoping to be set right? There is a world of difference between those two things. I am sure that you don't need for me to multiply words here. But that is the difference right on the basis of it of

¹⁸ J. N. Darby, "Reflections Upon The Prophetic Inquiry and The Views Advanced in It" *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Prophetic* No. 1, Vol 2. Available online at <http://www.plymouthbrethren.org/article/11495>. Last accessed Mar 1, 2012.

law and grace and you're not under law because law in that system cannot apply or cannot enter into your relation to God at the present time. You would be insulting Him. You can see, I'm sure, you'd be insulting Him to immediately try to put yourself on an earn basis and as you put yourself there to say, "well I'll add something to what God has done" and what He has done is to give me the perfection. I am perfect in it forever in the one sacrifice of Christ. I *am* that. Now I *am* that.¹⁹

This concept is presented as foundational to the whole series of lectures.

Dallas Theological Seminary, founded by Dr. Chafer, was the alma mater of Charles Ryrie, Zane Hodges, Earl Radmacher, Bob Wilkin and others who have led the Free Grace movement, and who have consistently and powerfully expounded and defended Free Grace from a Dispensational perspective.

III. DISPENSATIONALISM AND FREE GRACE: THEOLOGICALLY LINKED

The connection between Dispensationalism and Free Grace is not merely historical, it is theological as well. In the following section I lay out a few of these connections, though space does not permit a full treatment of all related issues. My hope is that these connections will be explored further by those who are more capable of doing so.

A. PURPOSE FOR NATIONAL ISRAEL

What does God do with His children who are stiff necked and rebellious? Does His holiness demand they be cast aside, or does His great integrity ensure that His promises stand firm, despite the rebellion of His people? The way we answer this question profoundly influences our views of God, of grace, and the security of the believer. With respect to Israel, Dispensationalists and non-Dispensationalists cannot offer the same answer to this question. Dispensationalists, taking a consistent literal view of

¹⁹Lewis Sperry Chafer. 1948. "The Spiritual Life, Lesson 1," Lectures on the Spiritual Life. MP3 file. <http://raystedman.org/mp3/4321.mp3> [accessed January 5, 2012]. Italics mark verbal emphasis.

Scripture, view God as faithful to His promises to Israel despite their disobedience while non-Dispensationalists allegorize these promises and view God as casting national Israel aside to be replaced by the Church.

After the first four centuries of the Church, and prior to the systemization of Dispensationalism by John Nelson Darby (around 1828), Christendom almost universally believed that God had cast aside national Israel, visiting upon them all of the curses of the Mosaic Covenant. Likewise they reserved in their minds all of the blessings of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants exclusively for the Church. This is still the case for non-Dispensationalists today.

As Bell states, Covenant (or Federal) Theology casts its overarching idea of the Covenant of Grace in a light of conditionality:

In this covenant, God promised eternal life to the elect on the condition of acting faith in Jesus Christ (...) By inserting the element of conditionality into the arena of grace, the Federalists frequently distorted the nature of grace and faith. In the covenantal theology, grace too often ceased to be the unconditional expression of God's love for his people, and became, in the mercantile language of the Federalists, a commodity purchased by man in God's marketplace.²⁰

Thus, in their view, man purchased and maintained covenantal relationship through active (working) faith.²¹ This seems to be the natural result of the view that God has abandoned Israel despite His promises to them. If failure to persevere in obedience released God from His promises to Israel, why not also the ones made to the individual believer? In the view of Covenant Theology, both are related to the same "covenant of grace," so if one is breakable, so must the other be.

By contrast, the Dispensationalist sees several covenants of a different nature. The Mosaic Covenant *was* wholly conditional

²⁰ Bell, *Scottish Calvinism*, 9.

²¹ Calvinists avoid the charge of salvation through human merit by seeing the initial repentant faith as a gift, and perseverance in faith and works as guaranteed by God to all the elect. But this does not lessen the fact that in this system these are conditions which need to be met in order to fulfill one's end of the covenant and if anyone does not meet these conditions they will be damned.

(more on this below). Under it, Israel was promised blessing for obedience and cursing if they were disobedient. The Mosaic Covenant was breakable and indeed was broken. But, the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants²² are guaranteed by God's faithfulness alone and cannot be broken. In the forging of the Abrahamic Covenant, God alone passed between the hewn animals demonstrating that He alone is responsible for seeing that it comes to pass (Gen 15:8-17). The Davidic and New Covenants, which further refine the Abrahamic,²³ are no less breakable.

Because of this understanding of the covenants, Dispensationalists see that despite Israel's disobedience, God has not entirely cast them aside, and that He still has a plan for their national redemption upon Christ's return. While the Church is grafted into Abraham's blessing, it does not supplant Israel and God will not under any circumstances allow His covenant to fail (see Ps 89:20-37; Jer 33:19-20; Ezekiel 37).

One can easily see that this very naturally supports the Free Grace position. On the front end, faith (active or otherwise) is not a means by which we purchase a covenant relationship; it is merely the channel by which God imparts the free gift of everlasting life.²⁴ Likewise, the security of the believer echoes God's dealings with Israel in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants, in that those who have received everlasting life by faith are entirely in God's hands and their security is not in any way dependent upon their perseverance. God's faithfulness

²²To this could be added the Peace Covenant (Ezek 34:25-30), but this covenant it not mentioned often in Scripture and is almost entirely absent from the Dispensational literature on covenants. For this reason, the discussion will be limited to the other covenants.

²³Also related to the Abrahamic Covenant is what is sometimes called *the Land Covenant*, described in Deut 29:1-30:20. While Israel will indeed be restored to the land promised in the Abrahamic Covenant (Ezek 37:1-25; Jer 33:19-26), I do not see this passage as expressing a separate covenant. Instead, it is a part of the blessings and curses of the Mosaic Covenant described in Deuteronomy 27-30, which states that Israel will be restored to the land after dispersion if they return to the Lord, see especially Deut 30:1-3.

²⁴By contrast, Lordship Salvation proponents echo the language of the early Federalists when they speak of saving faith as something we exchange or trade with God for everlasting life. It is not difficult to see that the argument which says Free Grace makes it too easy is nonsensical if faith is not something which is traded for everlasting life.

alone secures Israel's future; and His faithfulness alone ensures the security of eternal life for those who believe in Jesus. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim 2:13).

B. MOSAIC LAW AND THE CHRISTIAN

Everything in the Mosaic Law is conditioned upon works of obedience. This is plainly declared in Lev 18:5, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD" (see also Deuteronomy 28).²⁵ The Apostle Paul picks up on this and expresses the contrast between works-righteousness through the Law on the one hand and imputed righteousness through faith on the other in Gal 3:1-14 and elsewhere.

As discussed in the previous article, Dispensationalism alone is able to consistently maintain the distinction between grace and the Law and failing to do so introduces an element of conditionality into the relationship between the Savior and the Christian. However, in keeping the Church distinct from Israel and the Mosaic Dispensation separate from the Dispensation of Grace, the Dispensationalist is able to decisively and finally sever the ties between the Christian and the Mosaic Law as emphatically asserted by the Apostle Paul (Rom 6:14; 7:4-6; 2 Cor 3:3-18; Gal 2:16-3:25; 4:4-5; Eph 2:14-16; Col 2:11-23, etc.). This was the case among Dispensationalists from the very beginning. Commenting on Romans 7, Darby writes: "...we cannot be at the same time under the law and with Christ risen. This would be to have two husbands at once."²⁶

McClain sums up the Dispensationalist position on the believer's freedom from the Law in justification, sanctification, and preservation:

In Romans 3:20 we read that "by the deeds of the law...shall no flesh be justified in his sight."
And in this text the Holy Spirit seems to broaden sweepingly the exclusion of all deeds of the law

²⁵ To avoid confusion, I must point out that the Law was never able to give Christ's life (Gal 3:21), and that justification never could be through the Law (Rom 3:19-20). This was simply not the Law's purpose.

²⁶ J. N. Darby, "Deliverance from Under the Law, as Stated in the Holy Scriptures." Available online at <http://www.stempublishing.com/authors/darby/DOCTRINE/07007G.html>. Last accessed Feb, 5 2012.

from the divine act in the justification of sinners. There are no definite articles. The Greek text reads simply “by deeds of law.” Again in Romans 6:14 the Scripture declares not only that the law as law has absolutely nothing to contribute in the accomplishment of the believer’s sanctification, but on the contrary that freedom from the law’s bondage is actually one indispensable factor in that important work of God in the soul. Still further, when Paul comes to deal with the matter of Christian security in Romans 8, he asserts that the law has no power to keep us in safety, but “what the law could not do” in this regard, God sent His Son to accomplish for us and also in us (Rom 8:3-4). Thus we see that the law can neither justify, sanctify nor preserve us.²⁷

Dispensationalism not only sees the principles of law and grace as mutually exclusive (as means of obtaining the same thing), it sees them as *destructive* to one another. For example, Chafer writes:

The principles of law and grace are mutually destructive, and doctrinal confusion follows the intrusion of any legal principle into the reign of grace. When law is thus intruded, not only is the clear responsibility of the believer under grace obscured, but the priceless attitude of God in grace, which He purchased at the infinite cost of the death of His Son, is wholly misrepresented.²⁸

To bring in the Law as a condition for sanctification does not necessarily wipe out justification by faith apart from works entirely, but when it is coupled with the trading and purchasing concept of faith found in Covenant Theology, keeping the Law becomes a condition for so-called “final salvation.”²⁹ Thus, by

²⁷ Alva J. McClain, *Law and Grace: A Study of New Testament Concepts as They Relate to the Christian Life*, (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1954, 1967), 44-45.

²⁸ L. S. Chafer, *Grace: The Glorious Theme* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1922, 1950), 233. Regarding the law of Christ, see Hawley, “Dispensationalism and Free Grace: Intimately Linked, Part 1,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Spring 2011): 66, n. 5.

²⁹ This unbiblical term is becoming more common in theological discourse and seems to be the logical result of Lordship Salvation.

helping the interpreter to avoid the pitfall of mixing law and grace, Dispensationalism again naturally leads the interpreter to Free Grace.

C. JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Of course, there *is* an element of conditionality (though, not the Mosaic Law) found in Scripture primarily addressed to Christians (see, for example: John 15:1-6; Rom 8:17; 1 Cor 3:11-15; Phil 2:12; 2 Pet 1:5-11). This conditionality is not, however, associated with justification or with a so-called “final salvation.” It is related first to experiencing fellowship with God (John 14:21; 1 John 1:7). Secondly, we find it in connection with the Judgment Seat of Christ where believers will be rewarded according to their works. The Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10) as distinct from the Great White Throne Judgment of Rev 20:11-15 is a concept that is unique to Dispensationalism.

When the Judgment Seat of Christ became a primary doctrine early in the development of Dispensationalism through British Dispensationalist Robert Govett, and was carried on by those he influenced, it did not come into the forefront in American Free Grace theology until Zane Hodges.

Following the publication of *The Hungry Inherit*,³⁰ the Judgment Seat of Christ became a staple in Free Grace literature—and rightly so. While the Judgment Seat of Christ maintains its prominent place, a Free Grace interpretation of Scripture is almost inevitable. In addition, the apparent (though not actual) tension in Scripture between faith and works disappears. Faith alone has its proper place and works have theirs. The calls to persevere in order to inherit the kingdom (which are prevalent in the New Testament) are also easily explained without compromising the freeness of everlasting life, compromising the security of the believer, or manipulating statements which are clearly conditional into expressing inevitabilities.

Lastly, the doctrine also powerfully answers the charge of Antinomianism that is often leveled at Free Grace. Far from being unimportant, perseverance in faith and good works is tangibly related to the believer’s enjoyment of eternity because believers are rewarded on the basis of that perseverance (1 Cor 3:9-15; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 22:12).

³⁰Zane Hodges, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972).

IV. CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Free Grace rises and falls with Dispensationalism. There have been many teachers in history who have taught Free Grace without ascribing to Dispensationalism. John 3:16 is understandable by anyone who desires to understand it. But such teachers have never represented a large portion of pastors, theologians, or other ministers outside of Dispensational circles. There are simply too many things that can easily confuse the message of life when the practice of consistent literal hermeneutics is abandoned. But as all of these difficulties are easily answered by Dispensationalism, the Bible interpreter who holds to Dispensationalism has the liberty to take verses like John 3:16 (and the many other calls to believe and receive eternal life as a free gift) at face value.

For those who agree with both Dispensationalism and Free Grace, and who recognize the significant connection between the two, some practical applications follow.

Be vocal in sharing Dispensationalism. This may seem like a daunting task, but in most cases, you will not need to walk people through a textbook. Simply pointing out one clear distinction between the Church and Israel, between the kingdom and the Church, or between law and grace, can go a long way in helping people see the Scriptures and the grace they teach more clearly. Most people have not heard of these distinctions and they can certainly be eye openers. In my experience I have found that a simple statement about these things can easily turn into an evening full of fruitful conversation.

Teach Dispensationalism and hermeneutics in your church when appropriate. This is one of the best ways to prepare disciplemakers. Our church has Dispensationalism and hermeneutics as part of our basic discipleship curriculum that all of our church family goes through. As we have engaged in studying hermeneutics and Dispensationalism our congregation has found a renewed interest in Bible study due to greater confidence in being able to understand Scripture, a renewed passion for grace because they are seeing it more clearly in Scripture, more people have volunteered to start new Bible studies with their friends, and we have seen increased evangelism due to

greater confidence in being able to field objections. Lastly, as our congregation has been more actively engaged in ministry and more aware of our place in God's immutable plan, we have experienced a greater unity and love for one another.

Because of the terminology, hermeneutics and Dispensationalism may sound like dry topics, but they are far from it. Hermeneutics is the tool that equips us to discern the meaning of God's perfect Word. Dispensationalism is the glorious theme of God's plan for mankind, the thought of which caused the Apostle Paul to burst into beautiful doxologies (for example, Rom 11:25-36; Ephesians 3).

Pray for and support dispensational ministries. If you are unable to teach these topics for one reason or another, you can still pray for and support Dispensational ministries. If literal interpretation is not taught to future generations, grace won't be taught to them either. Dispensationalism began as a grass-roots movement, and it can continue to be spread at the most basic level. This is because the concepts are simple and because those who embrace those concepts can handle Scripture with confidence. People can share it with their friends and families and they do not need advanced degrees to do so. But even recognizing this, we should still see that laborers are necessary and cheerfully help those who take up this task. The principle laid out by the Lord to the seventy is still true today, "Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2).