

Am I Flexible Or Focused

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Am I Flexifocused?

There I was, sitting at my computer watching a speech being live-streamed from the national conference of the @!\$& &%%\$#@% &%%\$#. I was surprised to discover my face and name being associated with a new set of in-group/out-group labels, freshly coined. Weird. How did I (and many others) go from being accepted acolytes to heinous heretics? I'm actually not entirely sure.

That conference was the first time I'd heard the use of these new in-group/out-group labels. They are still in use today. Have you heard these terms? "Focused Free Grace" and "Flexible Free Grace."

Here's the shorthand as far as I can tell: Focused Free Grace = Good. Flexible Free Grace = Bad... apparently.

I was recently talking to a friend who is pretty well versed in the free grace circle, and he admitted he isn't clear on the definition of the terms. The boundaries of those two groups are a little hazy to me too, I agreed. It's confusing.

The truth is, I'm not trying to find out if I'm flexible or focused, because I think the whole thing has damaged all of us quite a bit. We can't call each other unwanted names without hurting ourselves in the process. Whether it hurts me or my brother, the family is damaged. It makes me very sad.

Nonetheless, you may feel you need to figure out in which camp I reside since I've written a few books that are meaningful to some

beloved free grace friends. So if you are asking, "Is Lucas Kitchen (that's me) focused free grace, or flexible free grace?" maybe I can help.

Instead of telling you whether I'm flexible or focused, (because I resist unsolicited name tags) I thought I'd just tell you what I believe on various free-grace hot topics. I'll leave it to you to determine how flexible or focused I am.

The segments that follow are raw, mostly unedited, opinions that represent what I believe currently. Although, I may be revealing too much about my flexifocus, these may not be the positions I have a year from now, or even a month. These are just my honest, right-now opinions about Free Grace issues. Hope this helps.

-Lucas Kitchen

Is Grace A License To Sin?

When someone becomes a believer, they receive irrevocable eternal life for free (John 10:28; John 3:16; Romans 6:23). While technically, a believer has the freedom to act in the way they wish (Galatians 5:13), a decision to pursue disobedience has intense and profound consequences.

Whether they know it or not, the believer enters an agreement to either obey Christ or experience Christ's discipline until they do (Hebrews 12:7-11; Revelation 3:19; Proverbs 3:11-12).

Because of man's free will, a person can spend their entire life as a believer disobeying Christ (Galatians 5:13, Deuteronomy 30:19), grieving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), and being what Paul calls carnal (1 Corinthians 3:1; Romans 8:7-8). The Lord's discipline is often invisible, enacted through natural circumstances and consequences, and thus other believers may not recognize it as God's discipline (Hebrews 12:7-8).

Likewise it's then possible for a believer to live their entire life under God's discipline producing no externally visible fruit (1 Corinthians 3:15). If a believer persists in disobedience their life might be cut short by the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:5; 11:30). There will also be a loss of

potential eternal rewards for those who disobey (1 Corinthians 3:15, 2 John 1:8).

So, while free grace teaches that believers can choose to sin, it does not teach that the sinner is free of consequences. While Free Grace affirms that a believer is once-and-for-all secure from the moment of belief on, there are intense and eternal consequences for persisting in disobedience.

Is The Gospel Of John the only book in the Bible where we get the saving message?

I believe that the gospel of John has a dual purpose.

Many have called John 20:30-31 the purpose statement for the Gospel of John. I believe this is right, but it's important to note what John didn't say. He didn't say he wrote his Gospel "to ONLY teach how to have ETERNAL life."

Instead he said, "...by believing you may have life in his name."

It seems significant to me that after using the term "Eternal life" so many times in chapter 1-12, that he *doesn't* say that his Gospel is ONLY to teach us how to have ETERNAL life, but instead the more generalized LIFE, which could include Eternal life but also include Abundant life (John 10:10). I think this is a reference to the fact that Jesus came to teach us how to have two types of life: Eternal Life, and Abundant Life. Likewise, I believe that John's Gospel has that same dual purpose.

I believe John 10:10 is the key to understanding John 20:30-31.

First Jesus said he came to give life [eternal]. I believe that roughly John chapter 1-12 is the section in which John relays Jesus' teaching on the subject. This is his salvation material.

Secondly Jesus said he came to give life more abundantly. I believe that roughly John chapter 13-21 is the section in which John relays Jesus' teaching on how to have an abundant life. This is his discipleship material.

There is a noticeable dividing point in the gospel of John that comes between chapter 12 and 13. Before 12 Jesus is largely trying to convince unbelievers to believe so that they can have eternal life. 13 and beyond, Jesus is mostly teaching his disciples who had already believed, and now needed to learn to abide, obey, and continue in the faith so that they could have abundant life.

I'm convinced that John sets up Jesus' later-chapter discussion on discipleship in chapter eight:

As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. (John 8:30-31)

He associates Discipleship with Abiding. Then in chapter fourteen, he brings it up. In chapter fifteen he talks extensively about abiding. He mentions it ten times. He continued for the next few chapters to talk about the Holy Spirit, Unity, Prayer, and Loving one another to show the world Jesus' love. There's just no question in my mind. The gospel of John has long passages about discipleship. It's embedded in his purpose for writing.

The idea that the Gospel of John has a discipleship purpose in addition to its evangelistic purpose should not be controversial. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..." Those

are discipleship-related issues, and they apply to all Scripture. Thus, John has a discipleship purpose in addition to his evangelistic purpose.

I think John's first 12 chapters are unique in the Bible. Coupled with the fact that he expresses his purpose as giving life by belief (John 20:30-31), I'm confident that we can treat John 1-12 as a specifically evangelistic segment of Scripture. However, I believe we need to be careful not to imply that John has no other purpose.

So John's Gospel is written to both unbelievers and believers. For unbelievers, it's a manual on how to get eternal life. For those who have believed already, it is a manual on how to make that life abundant by abiding, obeying, and continuing in the faith.

Is the saving message found anywhere outside of John?

While I believe John 1-12 is a uniquely evangelistic segment of Scripture, and I'd prefer to use it for evangelism, I admit it's not the only place in the Bible that contains a saving message. I made this point years ago in my book *Eternal Life*, by pointing out a passage in Romans, though I indicated my preference for John's Gospel, since Romans is written in a much more complex language.

So, I believe the saving message is present in other Biblical books apart from John. While it may not be the primary purpose of the writers of other biblical books, Some examples of the saving message in non-John books include Acts 13:38-39, 16:29-31, Romans 3:22-24, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Corinthians 15, and probably a handful more.

While my preference is to use the first half of the Gospel of John as my sole evangelistic content, I do not intend to divide from those who take a different approach. Many have received salvation by reading non-John books in the Bible. I do not wish to stifle the multiplicity of ways God has used evangelists to bring others to belief in Jesus.

This does not mean that all evangelistic approaches are acceptable; far from it. However, I do not seek to criticize those who are able to do faith-alone evangelism from books other than John, provided that in using the non-John approach, they are committed to being clear and coherent about the simple requirement for receiving eternal life.

Is repentance a requirement for receiving everlasting life?

Some FG teachers say repentance is either a pre-belief or a post-belief activity but that it's not a requirement for receiving everlasting life.

Alternatively, some FG teachers say that repentance is sometimes used as a synonym for faith or belief, and under that definition it is another way of expressing the requirements for receiving eternal life.

This difference reveals that “repentance” does not have a standardized definition even among Free Grace teachers. So when someone asks me a question about repentance, I want to know what they mean by “repent.”

The most popular definitions seem to fall into three categories:

1. A change of behavior.
2. A change of belief.
3. A change of belief and behavior.
4. Remorse.

If someone defines “repent” as a “change of behavior” then we must acknowledge that it has no place in receiving eternal life by faith-alone. (Titus 3:5)

If someone defines “repent” as a “change in belief and behavior” then we must also acknowledge that it is not among the requirements for receiving everlasting life by faith-alone. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

However, if someone defines “repent” as a change of belief (sometimes called a change of mind), then by their definition, “repent” may be a synonym for faith. Thus we must be careful to find out what the person means by “repent.” I discovered this phenomenon when a friend asked me, “Can’t a person ‘repent’ of unbelief.” It’s a provocative question that makes a good point. Under a very focused definition of the word, there is a way to present a faith-alone gospel and use the word “repent.”

The fact that there is a popular definition of “repent” that is compatible with the faith-alone presentation does not tell us what the Biblical authors meant when they said “repent.” It only indicates that we must be aware of the varied uses of the word in modern English.

In scripture, there are a number of passages that seem to be evangelistic instructions that include the word repent. I do not believe it is a direct synonym for “believe” but a concept that includes “believe” as one of its constituent parts. “Repent” in these contexts seems to mean something like “reconsider.” To reconsider has two concepts embedded within. 1. Give up your previous belief, and 2. Come to a new belief. In the cases where “repent” is used in an evangelistic way, I believe this is what is being said. Some examples might include: Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30, 2 Peter 3:9.

In favor of the idea that “repentance” can sometimes be used to describe a change of belief, notice this:

I preached that they should **repent** and turn to God and demonstrate their **repentance** by their deeds (Acts 26:20)

Clearly the deeds and the repentance are separate. The repentance must be demonstrated by deeds. This makes it sound like it's a change of belief, apart from a change of behavior.

However, it is not always presented this way. Note this:

I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in **repentance** and have faith in our Lord Jesus. (Acts 20:21)

This makes it sound as if repentance is not a synonym for faith in Christ, but a separate action. Here is yet, another that seems to give a different impression:

Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of **repentance**. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." (Acts 19:4)

This verse seems to equate repentance with belief in the one coming after. Here's another with a slightly different flavor.

When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." (Acts 11:18)

Here, repentance leads to life. We know from John and Paul, that belief in Jesus leads to life. I don't believe he's using repentance as a synonym, instead, I think he means that repentance is a broad concept that includes "belief" as one of its constituent parts. Another way of putting it might be that: Repentance is a process that includes, as one of its steps, belief.

My reason for sharing these, which are only a few chapters apart in the same Biblical book, is to point out the fact that the word "repentance" seems to have a fluid meaning.

In the past I have written about how I believed the word "repent" only meant one thing no matter where it appeared in the Bible. I don't

feel comfortable with that conclusion anymore. I'm leaning toward the idea that "repent" has a range of meanings depending on the context.

This should come as no surprise since we have often affirmed that most Biblical words have a range of meanings. We often point this out when the word "saved" appears in the text. If saved can encompass multiple concepts, I don't see why "repent" can't.

This opens the door to the possibility of how "repent" could be used in an evangelistic way. If the definition is fluid and context-dependent, then it would be possible for it to be used in an evangelistic way. It's not my personal preference, but I acknowledge that there is a way to do it, and still be sharing a faith-alone gospel.

It's my personal opinion that the most dominant definition of the word "repent" in Scripture is "A change of belief and behavior." Thus I am careful not to use the word "repent" as a salvific requirement, but I acknowledge that there are some who do so, and have a Biblical argument for why they can.

Since I'm aware of the multiplicity of popular definitions of "repent" I'm careful not to condemn all uses of the word "repent" in other teacher's gospel presentations. They may mean something that is, in fact, compatible with a faith-alone message.

It's for this reason that I do not automatically divide from Bible teachers who use the word repent in an evangelistic way, provided that it's being used as a synonym for faith.

Is it significant that John doesn't use "Repent"?

I do believe that it is significant that the Gospel of John does not use the word "repent." However, I want to be careful about the conclusions we draw from this.

I believe that the Gospel of John was written to teach the requirements for receiving eternal life (roughly John 1-12) and the requirements for living an abundant life (roughly John 13-21).

Among Free Grace teachers, much has been made of the fact that John does not use the word "repent" in his discussions about receiving eternal life (John 1-12), but it's significant that he also does not use the word "repent" in his section about living an abundant life (John 13-21). We must be careful not to make conclusions about the absence of "repent" in his salvific content, that we are not willing to equally apply to his discipleship section where he also doesn't use "repent."

John did not use the word "repent" to talk about how to get salvation, but nor did he use it when he taught us how to live as a disciple in his Gospel. He knew the word "repent" because he used it elsewhere (Revelation 3:19). However, he chose to leave it out in his magnum opus, which is about how to have salvation and how to be a disciple.

The simple fact is, we don't really know why he didn't use it. Maybe he foresaw the confusion it would create, a confusion we're still wrestling with today.

The fact that John does not use the word "repent" in his section about receiving eternal life, or his section about living an abundant life, seems to indicate that it is ok to leave out the word "repent" as long as the concept is well represented by an adequate synonym. The debate then is, what synonym is adequate, and whether the word should be applied to salvific content.

Now I will return to my opinion about the definition of "repent." It seems to most often be defined in Scripture's context as "change," and the context where it appears defines what needs to change. With that in mind, I lean toward only using it in a discipleship context, but there are a few Biblical uses that, along with their context, seem to stray close to meaning "a change in belief" and so for that I will refrain from saying that it *cannot ever* be used to share the saving message.

So for me, I prefer not to use the term "repent" when giving the requirements for receiving everlasting life, and feel entirely free to leave it out of the presentation, since John did.

However, I acknowledge that other teachers have a way of defining the word that makes it compatible with the faith-alone message, and so I do not intend to divide from anyone who takes that approach.

Does someone have to believe “In Jesus FOR eternal life”?

Some FG teachers say that a new believer must believe in Jesus specifically FOR the purpose of receiving eternal life.

Other FG teachers say the new believer must believe in Jesus’s finished work, and they will receive eternal life as a secondary result of that belief.

In my estimation in both cases the person who is believing is aware that the end result will be the reception of salvation. It seems that those who believe must understand and agree that Jesus gives salvation either directly or as a secondary result of belief, so I think both are technically believing in Jesus for a reason. The reason is so that they can have everlasting life/salvation/justification.

Some who teach “believe in Jesus FOR eternal life” argue that 1 Timothy 1:16 proves that we need to believe in Jesus FOR eternal life. This is a difficulty because it’s the only verse in the Bible that uses that construction, and the construction does not appear in the Gospel of John which is specifically evangelistic in the first 12 chapters. It likewise doesn’t appear in any of the other identifiable evangelistic

passages. So, I don't believe 1 Timothy 1:16 offers a conclusive end to the debate.

There are other teachers who prefer sharing the gospel from Paul's writings where he emphasizes justification, forgiveness, salvation, and righteousness. I'm confident that a faith-alone salvation message can be drawn from these passages as well.

So, while it is my preference to use the phrase, "believe in Jesus FOR eternal life," in addition to other explanations about the gospel's broader context. I think that those who do not use the phrase have a strong Biblical argument to refrain from that terminology. It's my opinion that even in cases where teachers use the Pauline focus of justification, the implied result is still eternal salvation. So, I do not intend to divide from other free grace believers who use a different approach from me.

Is assurance of salvation required to have salvation?

Another way I've heard this question is: Do you have to believe in eternal security to be saved?

Technically assurance and eternal security are two different things. Eternal security is the fact that the believer is saved forever and can never lose their salvation no matter what. Assurance of salvation is the personal belief that you are eternally secure.

Linguistically speaking, to "believe" something is to know that it's true, to be convinced, to be persuaded, to have assurance of it. That is true in koine Greek, and it's true in modern English. So, to believe in Jesus "for" his free gift of everlasting life, is to know you have it. It's to have assurance of salvation. It is the same thing as being "assured" that you have eternal life.

Some FG teachers say that the concept of eternal security is embedded in the term eternal life. However, translators are divided on the term "eternal" in the phrase "eternal life" since it can also mean, "life in the age to come." So, the eternally secure nature of the phrase is one possible conclusion that can be derived from the term "eternal

life” but I don’t believe it’s a required conclusion the reader must draw to be saved.

The idea that a would-be believer has to have considered whether eternal life can be lost, does not seem to be inherent in the requirement to believe. It is a clear conclusion from Biblical context, but I don’t believe a person has to have fully considered all of the logical eventualities to be saved. We know Eternal Life can’t be lost from context and inference, but the notion is left unsaid in many of the NT’s evangelistic conversations. So, I don’t think a new believer to whom it hasn’t occurred to consider eternal security, lacks salvation because they haven’t yet considered it. Now, it is suspect if a person outright denies eternal security at the moment of their saving faith, but if a person has not considered it at the moment of belief, the lack thereof does not constitute a lack of saving faith, in my view.

So, for me the traditional questions we ask about salvation are enough to confirm adequate assurance of salvation. These types of questions might include:

Are you going to heaven when you die?

Are you saved?

Do you have eternal life?

If a person who believes in Jesus can truthfully answer “yes” to one of these questions, I am satisfied that they have experienced an adequate level of assurance to be saved (Provided they understand the other terms of the gospel—it’s apart from works, it’s only in Jesus, and it’s by faith alone).

Technically, if someone, at any point in their life, could have truthfully answered those questions “yes” I’m convinced they will be in Heaven forever with Christ (provided they understood the other terms of the gospel).

Let's deal with some hypotheticals!

Some teachers imply the would-be believer must consider a handful of hypothetical extrapolations in order to confirm they have experienced true assurance or a real saving faith.

While I believe a simple assurance of salvation (as defined above) is required for saving faith, I do not believe assurance is defined by extrapolated hypotheticals.

Hypotheticals can be used to great affect to verify that a person understands the terms of the saving message. However, we must be careful not to imply that someone who has never considered those hypotheticals is unsaved.

It's possible to have a simple saving faith, without having considered the hypothetical potentialities. It's possible to have assurance that Jesus has saved me without yet having considered all my other beliefs that are in logical contradiction with my new saving faith. It's even possible to have simple saving faith, while simultaneously holding faulty beliefs about the automatic (or non-automatic) life-style outcome that will result from saving faith.

At the moment of saving faith a person may not have yet considered:

Would I still be saved if someday I fall into a lifestyle of sin?

Would it prove I never really had eternal life if I don't endure?

Would I still be saved if someday I stop believing?

I believe a person can have saving faith, having never considered the "if statements" about eternal security. However, if at the moment of evangelism, someone did consider these possibilities and answered "no" to any of them, I'd continue to try to convince them of the truthfulness of eternal security, because it is the basis of so much in the Christian life.

There is a difference between never having had assurance and having an embedded belief that might later erode assurance. I think we have confused the two.

I can (1) currently believe, (meaning I'm completely sure) I have a friend named Lula, while also (2) believing I have occasional schizophrenic hallucinations. If a month from now I become convinced that Lula was not real, but a hallucination, that does not invalidate the fact that I truly believed, and was assured I had a friend named Lula at a given time. I had assurance, even though I had an embedded secondary belief that would eventually erode that confidence.

Some might argue that I should have known. I should have been able to logically extrapolate. I should have anticipated that my secondary belief would dissolve my confidence in the first belief. But the expectation that a person be able to logically extrapolate eventual pitfalls, is not a good basis for evaluating whether or not a person has experienced assurance. We've confused the two.

A person can (1) have assurance they are saved by their faith alone in Christ alone, while (2) also believing that The Holy Spirit will automatically produce good works in his life apart from the will of the believer. Of course, later on down the line, if they continue to live in sin, it would be easy for them to lose their assurance that they are saved. The fault lies with the embedded, secondary belief which can erode their original assurance, but that's not the same thing as never having assurance in the first place. It simply didn't occur to them at the time of saving faith that their secondary belief was flawed.

A person can (1) have assurance they are saved by their faith alone in Christ alone, and (2) also believe that hypothetically a person can lose their salvation if they continue in sin. Obviously, later the secondary belief about the hypothetical situation can erode their assurance, but that doesn't mean they didn't have assurance they were saved. It didn't

occur to them that the secondary faulty belief is the equivalent to a works salvation. If it hadn't occurred to them at the moment of their saving faith, I'm convinced that they are covered by Jesus grace. That's because they assumed they would not lose their salvation because they assumed Jesus would not allow them to fall into sin. They had faith in Jesus for salvation, and a faulty belief about who's responsibility it was to live a Godly life.

I'm convinced that a person can have assurance that they are saved by Jesus, while also holding faulty hypothetical views about what might happen in the future. I do not believe the logical contradiction necessarily means they never had assurance.

I'm confident that if a child can believe and be saved (Luke 18:17) then considering a myriad of hypothetical potentialities must not be a requirement, because children do not do that naturally. Add to that the fact that we don't see the use of future-facing hypothetical "if statements" as a confirmation process present in the NT's evangelistic conversations.

So, I'm confident that, while "having assurance" is a synonym for believing (as defined above), the definition of assurance does not include the requirement to have answered or even considered hypothetical extrapolations about eternal security. My personal preference is to help the potential believer consider some of the hypothetical possibilities at the point of evangelism, but I do not intend to divide from other groups of believers who do not approach gospel presentations in the same way.

Do you have to believe in Jesus' Death and Resurrection to be saved?

This question is sometimes asked another way: Is Free Grace a crossless gospel?

Many who argue that you absolutely must believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus to be saved reference 1 Corinthians 15 as proof. So we could add another form of this question to the mix:

Is the content of 1 Corinthians 15 the model for Saving Faith?

First, the Bible doesn't seem intent on answering questions about the minimum content of saving faith. The biblical writers seem more satisfied with supplying as much information about Christ as they have space for, and as much as they can to make their argument. They don't seem set on trying to dissect the message down to the hypothetical minimum, so I think we must proceed with caution since the Biblical writers didn't engage in this kind of activity.

I believe that someone can get the saving message from 1 Corinthians 15. Some have noted that 1 Corinthians 15 makes no mention of

justification, eternal life, and some of the terms that are considered standard to evangelistic passages. However, it does mention being “saved” (vs 2) by the gospel that is included in the following verses.

What’s fascinating to me is that instead of using terms of eternal life, justification, and righteousness, Paul takes a different approach entirely. He uses the resurrection as a synonym for salvation. It reminds me of Jesus’ discussion on the topic in John 11. So, I believe 1 Corinthians 15 contains a saving message through the concept of resurrection rather than some of the other standard terms we are used to.

With that said, I’m convinced that 1 Corinthians 15 Is NOT designed to be a measuring stick for which we measure all other gospel presentations. It’s a specific approach that focuses on the resurrection. However, I don’t believe we should use it to discount or disqualify other passages as evangelistic.

So when we consider the various evangelistic passages together there are three approaches we could take to the content of the saving message:

1. One must believe all content in all evangelistic passages
2. One must believe only what is mutually present in all evangelistic passages
3. One must believe what’s in at least one of the evangelistic passages

My preference is to say number three is most likely to be right. That would mean that someone could technically get saved by believing a gospel presentation that doesn’t include every detail about Jesus’ life.

In evangelizing, if someone mentioned that Jesus is the Son of God and we know so by his miracles but then accidentally neglected to

mention that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, I'm convinced that the listener could still believe in Jesus and receive eternal life, despite not having yet heard of his death and resurrection. However, in actual practice, I think this hypothetical possibility doesn't do us much good because anyone who neglects the mention of the cross and resurrection should readily admit they've made a huge mistake.

To not yet have heard Jesus died and rose, but to be open to it is different from outright denying it.

If someone says they believed in Jesus for salvation, but they never believed that he died and rose again, I would approach that person as if they need to be evangelized. Technically they may have eternal life, I don't know, but I'm not going to ignore this huge issue. Out of an abundance of caution I would assume they need to be evangelized. So once again, I don't think the idea that a person might be able to be saved without believing in Jesus' death and resurrection is a useful theological point, since if a person doesn't believe those things, I'm going to treat them as if they need to be evangelized.

I believe that Jesus' death and resurrection is "required belief" in the sense that it is the consummate verifier of Jesus' identity. If someone believes in Jesus for their salvation but doesn't believe that that Jesus rose from the dead, then they are believing in the "wrong" Jesus. The Jesus who gives salvation is the Jesus who died for sins and rose again. So I consider Jesus' death and resurrection as "required belief" in that sense. So, one needs to believe in the Jesus who died and rose to receive his offer of eternal life, not a Jesus who didn't.

So let's pull back from the hypothetical and address the practical. When I meet a person who needs to be evangelized, I always treat the crucifixion and the resurrection as if it is "required belief" even if it is technically not. It seems that acting as if they are not "required beliefs" and being wrong, is much more dangerous than if they are

technically not “required beliefs” but I teach them as if they are. So while I think it’s theoretically possible for a person to get saved who does not yet know about the resurrection and the cross, it’s only a heretic that would say we should remove their mention from the presentation. From my perspective, all FG teachers I know teach the cross and resurrection, even when they don’t believe it’s technically a “required belief.”

Its for these reasons that I am willing to fellowship and partner with teachers who believe either way, as long as they consistently teach the cross and the resurrection. If someone teaches the cross and the resurrection are absolutely “required beliefs” I am more than willing to partner with them, because there is a strong Biblical argument for that position. If someone teaches that the cross and resurrection are not technically “required beliefs” but they teach them anyway, I’m more than willing to partner with them as well. I do not intend to divide from teachers or believers who have a different preference than I do on this issue.

Are the whole world's sins forgiven, or just those who believe in Jesus?

Some have claimed that the sins of the entire world have already been forgiven because of Jesus' work on the Cross. The verses cited for this are John 1:29 and 1 John 2:2. This has been coupled with the idea that people will not be in hell for their sins but because they didn't believe in Jesus. I've always found this argument lacking.

If John 1:29 and 1 John 2:2 were the only verses on the subject, this might be a compelling argument, but they aren't the only verses that talk about the subject.

The simplest answer is, I don't know. I don't know exactly how forgiveness fits into salvation, but I feel pretty strongly that the above concept isn't quite right.

There are just too many verses that show that a person's sins are forgiven in relation to their saving faith.

Acts 10:43, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:13-14, Acts 13:38-39 all seem to indicate that forgiveness is given conditionally to those who have received redemption.

John 8:21-24, Romans 6:23 seem to indicate that the unbeliever is not forgiven.

The bottom line is that we still need to believe in Jesus to receive salvation. By so doing, we are equally forgiveness of sins.

I feel completely comfortable fellowshiping and even partnering with people who believe either way.

Well?

Well, what do you think? Am I flexible or focused? Feel free to let me know what you think. You can reach me through the contact form at www.freegrace.in.