

The Five Points of Free Grace

by Jonathan Perreault

Most of us have probably heard of "The Five Points of Calvinism"—the so-called TULIP acronym—but have you heard of "The Five Points of Free Grace"? If you haven't, don't feel bad. It didn't exist until recently—at least as far as I know. What are the "5 Points of Free Grace"? Good question! To date, several variations have been proposed. Daniel Weierbach of C4C Apologetics came up with the LOTUS acronym, which stands for (are you ready for a mouthful?):

L = Liable Depravity

O = Occupational Election

T = Total (or Tiered) Atonement

U = Unlimited (or Undeserved) Grace

S = Security of the Saints

Shawn Lazar of Free Grace International popularized the LOTUS acronym when he wrote a book on it titled *The Five Points of Free Grace*, using Weierbach's exact breakdown and terminology. Lazar's endorsement gave the LOTUS acronym a massive signal boost. While I wouldn't say that I agree with Lazar on every nuance of Free Grace Theology, I agree with much of what he says in terms of his theological perspective in contrast to Calvinism.

But the potential problem that I see with the LOTUS acronym is that his five points are just too abstruse (meaning unnecessarily complicated for the average person). To the point that it's almost esoteric! In other words, it is the very opposite of *plain*. Whereas the apostle Paul said that his aim was to set forth the truth "plainly" (2 Cor. 4:2, NIV). This is where I think the LOTUS unfortunately wilts. Because in explaining each of its five points, Lazar uses theological vocabulary that most people have never heard of, much less that they use in everyday speech. For example, I myself don't even know what is meant by "Tiered Atonement"! This kind of theologically complex and even arcane language makes it much more difficult for people to understand, and even more difficult to explain. Hence the meaning of his acronym is largely unintelligible to the average person. And so, as far as understanding the meaning of "LOTUS," the barrier to entry is quite high. Its meaning is reserved for the theological elite, which is maybe who Lazar was writing for anyway. So all that to say, the idea is a good one but it needs to be simplified in a way that the majority of people can more easily understand.

Personally, I don't think that "Occupational Election" is the best descriptor either, because not all Free Grace people subscribe to the view that God's election is only to

service, not salvation. For example, I believe that God's election is also for salvation but it is according to His foreknowledge (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1-2) and it incorporates a person's will and individual choice into His choice (see Jn. 6:40). In other words, God's election is not determinative because He has willed "to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). Thus the saying is true: "God chooses to save those who choose to believe."

But my overall thought is that each of the five points needs to be more easily understandable. As J. Vernon McGee has said in his quaint way: "Put the cookies on the bottom shelf." McGee also was fond of pointing out that Jesus said "Feed my sheep," not "Feed my giraffes"! And that's why I like the GRACE acronym better as a way of describing the so-called "Five Points of Free Grace". Not only because the word "grace" is straight out of the Bible, but also because it's part of the "Free Grace" label itself! Thus it's easy to remember: "The Five Points of Free Grace" are G.R.A.C.E.—what could be simpler? Thus, instead of conforming the five points to a flower in order to imitate Calvin's TULIP, let's conform the five points to God's GRACE and imitate the Bible! Isn't that a better approach?

I want to make sure that I give credit where credit is due. I didn't come up with the GRACE acronym. It was apparently first proposed by Marcia and Ken Hornok in a comment over at Free Grace International, and I like the idea a lot! Here is what they said:

"It would be helpful for FG organizations to have an acronym, comparable to TULIP. Say, for example, GRACE:

G = GRACE GIFT – By God's Grace and Jesus Christ's Provision through His death and resurrection, the free gift of eternal life is offered to all the world.

R = RESPONSE OF FAITH – Faith means believing that what God has said, He will do. This has been the means of justification from Adam on. A person can show that response in a variety of ways.

A = ASSURANCE OF SALVATION – A person's response of faith results in their knowing for sure that their sins are forgiven and they have eternal life that can never be lost.

C = CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION – Scriptures must be understood in context and interpreted first by what the original wording meant to the original readers. This is best done by learning what it says in the original languages.

E = ETERNAL REWARDS – the justified sinner becomes a sanctified saint through walking by means of the Holy Spirit, obeying God's Word, and intimacy with God. God rewards such sacrifice and service by the privilege of reigning with Christ in the future eternal kingdom.

Perhaps this needs tweaked, and of course biblical references supplied, but the FG organizations I'm familiar with would agree that these 5 elements are primary and (I hope) irrefutable."^[1]

I do agree that the acronym needs to be "tweaked"—but it's a great starting point! Personally, I'd suggest fine-tuning point #1—the "G," because using the word "grace" in both the acronym itself as well as in the description is a bit redundant. But explaining the "G" in GRACE simply as "GIFT" is perfectly fine. Or maybe "GIFT OF GOD" might be a slight improvement, as it is more descriptive and also pairs well with the two following points which are explained in a similar way. Thus the first three points would be: G = GIFT OF GOD, R = RESPONSE OF FAITH, and A = ASSURANCE OF SALVATION. The point is, "The Five Points of Free Grace" is still a work in progress.

And if we do use LOTUS, I suggest using a simplified version of it. For example, we could say:

L = Loved By God (cf. Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8, etc.)
O = Only Believe (*i.e., faith alone in Christ alone*)
T = To Whosoever Will (*i.e., To All Who Will, or Total Accessibility*)
U = Unlimited Atonement
S = Salvation By Grace

Soli Deo Gloria! To God alone be the glory!

ENDNOTE:

[1] Marcia and Ken Hornok, comment on Shawn Lazar, "The Spectrum of Free Grace Theology," Free Grace International (March 23, 2023), <https://freegrace.in/the-spectrum-of-free-grace-theology/>. In a reply, Lazar wrote: "I like the direction that the acronym is going."