

HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHEAP GRACE AND REGULAR GRACE

The Lutheran understanding of grace is often summed up by Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” The term “cheap grace” applies when a person knowingly uses God’s grace as a justification for sin—by commission or omission. The following rationales usually signal the presence of cheap grace:

1 “I KNOW GOD WILL FORGIVE ME, SO I’M GOING TO _____ ANYWAY.”

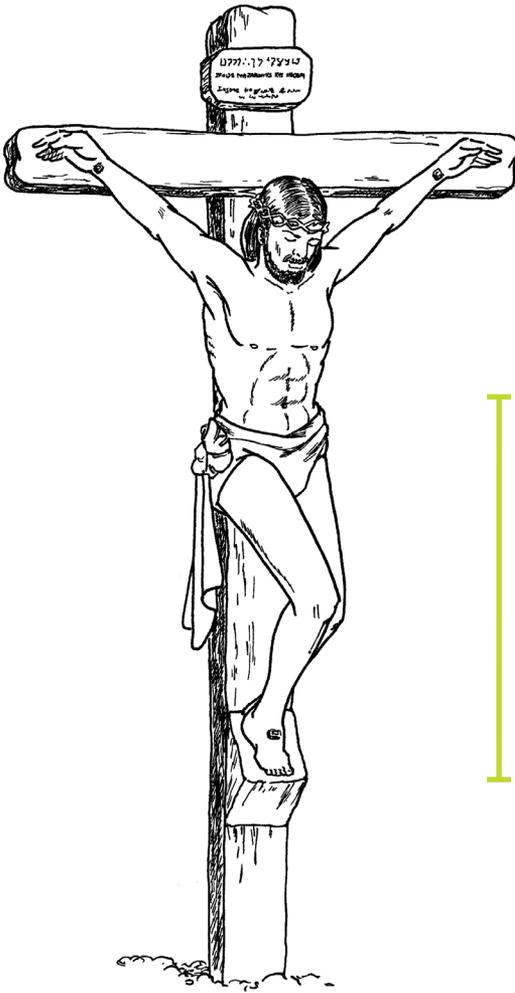
No sin is unforgivable. However, as Paul writes in Romans 2:4, “Do you realize that God’s kindness is meant to lead us to repentance?”

2 “JESUS THREW OUT THE OLD LAW AND MADE A NEW LAW.”

Jesus conquered sin, death, and the power of the devil when he died and rose again. However, the law still applies. Jesus addressed this in his Sermon on the Mount when he said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

3 “IT’S EASIER TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS THAN PERMISSION.”

If so, you’re probably looking for a helping of cheap grace. Isaiah 66:2 says God looks to the “humble and contrite in spirit.” God doesn’t call us to go through the motions of asking forgiveness as a formality. People aren’t truly “contrite” if they knew in advance they were about to do something wrong.



Regular grace is actually quite costly, as it has been paid for through Jesus' precious blood and innocent suffering and death in atonement for our sins. Regular grace is a free gift to you.

4 "SIN BOLDLY."

Many well-meaning Lutherans invoke this partial quote by Martin Luther to justify their sins. In fact, Luther intended to refute cheap grace when he said, "Sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly, for he is victorious over sin, death, and the world." Your identity in Christ is the critical thing; glossing over sin with half-truths only obscures this.

BE AWARE

- 1 Humans manufacture cheap grace. Regular grace pops out of nowhere, undeserved, uncontrived, and dismantles all your self-justifications before Christ because it comes straight from God.
- 2 Paul reminds us in Romans 6:1-2, “What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?”
- 3 *Antinomian* is a fancy word for someone who indulges in “cheap grace.” (Anti = “against,” Nomian = “law.”)



Cheap grace is most often attended by a certain flip attitude and used as excuse or permission for sin. Cheap grace is manufactured by humans and costs nothing.