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Lordship Salvation

Gal 1:1-9

We have talked many times about these verses, but I want us to be reminded that Paul warns that even a small change in the message of the Gospel creates another Gospel, which is not another.

There can only be one true Gospel.

If you say you are saved by grace, plus works, is it salvation? No

Rom 11:6 “And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

Eph 2:8 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Even a subtle change is still a change.

There is a doctrine being taught today that we need to look at – Lordship Salvation.

Lordship salvation is a phrase/concept introduced to Christianity by an influential Californian preacher named John MacArthur in the 1970’s and 80’s.

He is a Calvinist and what he has done is to take Calvinist teaching and try to make it acceptable to non-Calvinist Christianity. This teaching ends up being partly the teaching of Total Inability, which requires regeneration before faith, and also the Perseverance of the Saints, where you have to hold on and keep working to prove that you can persevere or else you were never saved.

The basic idea – Lordship Salvation teaches that you must be willing to forsake all your sin and change your life before you can come to Christ by faith.

At first hearing, Lordship Salvation doesn’t sound that bad.

But, it is a call for discipleship (something that a Christian does) before a person has come to God by faith.

The motivation (good) – to cut down on false professions and increase the commitment/retention level. It is presented as an alternative to the shallowness that is found in many churches that give out a Gospel of easy believism, as followers of that teaching say that repentance is not necessary for salvation.

Thus, they say,” “You cannot receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour without receiving Him as your Lord.”

Or

“He’s either Lord of all, or not Lord at all.”

The problems (bad)

Theologically – it ends up looking like works salvation

Practically – by making salvation difficult to obtain it discourages people from coming to Christ.

Before a person is saved there is no way that he can look at the Christian life and understand how he could live it.

Once you have trusted Christ and are born again, with the Holy Spirit indwelling you, then you have the strength to start changing your life.

What MacArthur is doing in presenting this teaching is using the Calvinist teaching that you are regenerated by God without you being even aware that it happened, so that you can believe.

Since you were regenerated – born again – it is not inappropriate to call for you to also be a disciple before you believe.

The real issue here is whether a sinner must make Christ the Lord of his life at the time he believes on Christ for salvation.

Of course we all believe that a person **should** make Christ their Lord after they are saved, but this changes the timing.

Errors of Lordship Salvation:

1. Their denial that there can be a carnal Christian.

None of us enjoys the fact that there are carnal Christians, but the Bible still tells us that they are there. They teach that if a person is carnal that it is proof that he is not saved. (What about chastening?)

Paul referred to the Corinthian brethren as carnal.

1Co 1:1 Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,

1Co 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

1Co 1:3 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Co 1:4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

1Co 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.

1Co 3:2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able.

1Co 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

2. Their denial that a believer has two natures which conflict.

MacArthur says:

"I believe it is a serious misunderstanding to think of the believer as having both an old and new nature.

Believers do not have dual personalities...there is no such thing as an old nature in the believer" (*Freedom From Sin--ROMANS 6-7*, Moody Press, pp. 31-32).

Yet the Bible shows the battle that we have between the flesh and the spirit.

‘For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.’ (Galatians 5:17).

In Romans 7, Paul explains the battle that rages continually in even the most spiritually mature people. He laments that he does what he doesn’t want to do and, does the evil that he hates.

‘So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.’ (Romans 7:25).

3. They confuse salvation and discipleship.

Salvation is obtained in an instant. Discipleship is an on-going process.

Salvation costs us nothing. Discipleship costs us everything.

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul wouldn't have had to beg the saved Romans to do this if they had already done it in order to get saved.

4. They fail to understand that there are 3 aspects of sanctification.

Since they teach that you are to yield completely in order to receive salvation, then this destroys the concept of gradual Christian growth into maturity.

They require Christian maturity at the same time as Christian infancy.

1Pe 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

This error leads to the teaching of perfectionism, that you are to reach a point of perfection while still on the earth.

a) Positional sanctification

1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Heb 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

God sees us sanctified positionally in Christ.

b) Progressive sanctification

‘Sanctify them through thy truth’. (John 17:17).

‘For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication’. (I Thess. 4:3).

As we gain victory over temptation, we are progressively sanctified.

c) Future sanctification

‘who shall change our vile body.’ (Philippians 13:21).

‘When he shall appear, we shall be like him.’ (I John 3:2).

‘Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself (progressive sanctification), even as he is pure (positional sanctification by justification)’. (I John 3:3).

The sanctification necessary for the salvation of any Christian has already been attained by Christ’s sacrifice. (Hebrews 10:10).

5. They have a distorted view of faith and repentance.

Repentance is basically a change of mind about Christ, myself as a sinner, and the inability of my works to save me.

I see myself as a sinner deserving of hell and realise that I need to look to Christ for salvation.

Calvinists and Lordship salvationists wrongly define repentance as turning from sin, changing one’s life, remorse, etc.

Key: The obvious question is: How much must one turn from sin to be saved, when nobody can ever totally turn from sin? This brings us to works for salvation.

6. They rely on modern Bible versions to prove Lordship salvation.

Colossians 2:6

KJV: ‘As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

NIV: ‘So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, so continue to live in him.’

Romans 10:9

KJV: ‘That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,’ NIV: ‘That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord”, ...’ Good News Bible: ‘If you declare with your lips, “Jesus is Lord”, ...’

The difference between salvation and lordship is seen in Paul's different instructions to unsaved and saved men:

To the unsaved:

Remember the question of the Philippian jailer.

Act 16:30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Act 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

To the saved:

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

No unsaved man could ever meet the demands for always 100% surrendering to Christ's lordship.

Let me give you an illustration.

If you were witnessing to someone and they asked,
'Do I have to give up my cigarettes to get saved?'

- If you say 'yes' you have just planted a demand for and trust in his own works in order to get saved.
- If you say 'no' you have just told him that it is ok to take God on his terms, use Jesus as a fire escape, and keep right on living the old life.

I don't like either option

...so I say, 'The first thing you must do is get saved, and then let the Lord help you to grow in grace afterward.'

The truth is that, as a lost man, he won't have the power or grace available to him to give up anything. Nor should he view salvation as involving himself giving up anything as this would cause him to trust his own good works.

Does God want him to give up his sins?

Yes, but the Holy Spirit will grow him from infancy into maturity and along the way deal with a multitude of things he needs to give up and things he needs to start.

Please do not misunderstand me

...I am not saying that it is ok for a Christian to live in rebellion against God; I am saying it is possible, albeit incredibly dangerous.

...I am not saying that it is ok for a person to trust Christ and continue to live willfully in his sin.

I am saying that growth in grace into Christian maturity is gradual rather than instantaneous

...and I am also saying that when you look at a lost man, and along with telling him to acknowledge his sin and trust Christ for salvation, he is also required to immediately be willing to give up any/everything in order to get that salvation or else he can't have it

...then I am placing a theologically confusing and unscriptural burden upon him.

Such an unscriptural burden, while well intended, has the practical result of making salvation incredibly difficult.

One would have to jump through, or be willing to jump through, a whole bunch of hoops in order to get saved

...and I don't believe that.

I believe salvation is simple

I believe salvation is easy
I believe salvation is free
I believe salvation is readily obtainable and available

...let's not make it hard when Christ made it simple