

Introduction: Salvation. The 'Lordship' Heresy

Galatians 3:21 - If the law had been given which was able to impart eternal life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

Galatians 3:22 - But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Paul had previously made the case in chapter 2 of Galatians by repeating the principle on three occasions within one verse:

Galatians 2:16 - Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified.

He concludes the chapter with a stroke of logic which is impossible to ignore:

Galatians 2:21b - if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

Yet in spite of all this Biblical evidence, there are those who insist that man will not live as God desires him to live unless he is threatened with uncertainty about his eternal future.

It is true that those who are saved often do not live as God desires them to live, but that is a matter between God and that believer—it is not a condition for canceling that person's salvation or asserting that he never was saved in the first place.

This approach in fact expresses a lack of faith by assuming that the power of God to create a new creature at salvation cannot subsequently transform that saved individual into the likeness of Christ.

It is true that many Christians do not make that transformation. But the transformation is dependent upon human volition. If the believer chooses not to utilize the many assets which the grace of God provides him at salvation, then God in grace permits that person to pursue his own objectives.

This is not a condemnation of grace but an affirmation of it. Grace means no strings are attached, no coercion is imposed, no penance is required. Grace says that God provides, man decides. If the believer is positive to God's Plan, then God will teach it to him and blessings will follow. If he is negative to God's Plan, then the believer remains ignorant and poor decisions result in suffering under the Law of Volitional Responsibility.

But Satan's first desire is to prevent an individual from ever getting to the status of Christian. A false Gospel makes it impossible for any unbeliever to be saved. It is through false gospels by which Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers.

2 Corinthians 4:3 - Even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

2 Corinthians 4:4 - in whose case the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

If Satan wishes to blind the minds of the unbelievers, he could develop no better strategy then to confuse the Church so that an inaccurate Gospel is presented.

If the professing church does not know the conditions for salvation, then how can it reveal to the unsaved an accurate Gospel? It cannot.

Yet many false teachers are in the world and some have taken up residence in the church and they justify their false gospels with appeals to the Scriptures.

Just because people misuse the Bible does not mean that the Bible is confusing. The Bible says only one thing. People have been giving it their own interpretations for millennia.

Passages are misquoted, taken out of context, given an interpretation which supports the false premise. Plain and unambiguous statements about the way of salvation are ignored by an appeal to an apparently contradictory passage elsewhere. Confusion results and leads to the blinding of another soul to the Gospel of eternal life.

On the other hand, if salvation is appropriated by faith alone in Christ alone, how can the new convert be sure of his eternal salvation?

If good works (performed by the new convert) are a necessary proof of salvation, the answer to this question must be: He can't be sure.

If works are included with faith as a co-condition for salvation, then it follows that works must occur in order for one to have assurance of his salvation.

If in order to prove one's faith in Christ was real, the convert must perform good works, then good works must occur in order for the convert to verify his faith.

When the necessity of good works is presented as a condition of salvation then the individual who professes faith in Christ cannot possess any certainty about his eternal future.

Under the rationales of lordship salvation, he cannot even be sure he has really believed.

And if a Christian cannot attest with absolute confidence about the certainty of his eternal future, then he has come to grossly misunderstand the message of the New Testament. Our Lord was precise and lucid when He said in:

John 5:24 – Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come to judgment, but has passed from death into life.

This verse is clear: he who *hears* and *believes*, *has*. What he *hears* is the word of Christ. The convert *believes* the message of God Who sent Christ as Savior. What he *has* as a result of his faith is everlasting life.

No works are implied in this verse. All verbs are of a non-meritorious variety: hearing, believing, having.

The unbeliever receives the action of hearing. Someone else speaks, he *hears* his message.

The convert believes the message by placing his faith in the object of salvation who is Jesus Christ. Jesus performed the work; we *believe* His work was effectual for our salvation.

The believer, as a result of his faith in Christ, *has* everlasting life. Again, he is the recipient of this action not the producer of it.

Therefore, if human works are a part of one's appropriation of salvation and everlasting life then Jesus is remiss in not making it known during His earthly ministry.

However, if works are the expected result of saving faith then one of the following things must be true:

1. The convert knows at the moment of expressing faith in Christ that he will produce good works.
2. The convert does not know at the moment of expressing faith in Christ if he has truly believed.

Even if you believe that if a person has truly believed he will persevere in good works, it is very difficult to believe he will know this at the moment of his expression of faith.

If a convert cannot be certain at the time of his expression of faith that he will produce good works, then he cannot know at that time if he is truly saved.

Lack of assurance of one's salvation thus leads to a lifestyle of works designed to assure one's self of his salvation. Emphasis is taken off the work of Christ and the grace of God and placed on the production of the individual.

As a result, few actions taken by the convert aren't inspired by ulterior motives. Assistance to others is not motivated by a desire to assist another person but to assure one's self of his salvation. Giving to the church is not a free will offering but a method of assuring one's self of his salvation. Involvement in church activities are not motivated by one's spiritual gift but rather by a desire to assure one's self of his salvation.

Some denominations insist that if a parishioner sins certain sins that he probably was not truly saved and thus penance must be paid by reciting mantras, giving money, lighting candles, or practicing novenas.

But a man can know if he has believed in Jesus Christ and the expression of such faith is, according to the Bible, sufficient for one's salvation, the imputation of eternal life, and the guarantee of a resurrection body.

Beginning in our next lesson we will examine more closely the Biblical view of salvation which is "faith alone in Christ alone."