

ESCAPING BONDAGE TO PRESENT-DAY PHARISAISM
"Part VI: Holding To The Liberated Salvation Gospel"
(Ephesians 2:8-10)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) We believe that to receive God's gift of eternal life, one must believe that Christ died for his sins, was buried and rose from the dead. However, ever since the Gospel has been preached, there has been a struggle for preserving the truth of this Gospel:

(a) In the days of the Early Church, the Apostles Peter and Paul stood against the Judaizers, affirming that salvation was by faith apart from any added work of circumcision, Acts 15:1-2, 6-11.

(b) Later, Christendom falsely asserted that faith was necessary, but along with it the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, the Mass, penance, extreme unction, orders and marriage. Men like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli led a reformation that held firmly to Ephesians 2:8-9, declaring that justification was by faith alone in Christ.

(c) Since then, many cults have suggested faith plus some added merit or work for salvation. **Yet, true Christians have continued to maintain the truth of Ephesians 2:8-9.**

(2) In our day, Dr. John MacArthur's book, The Gospel According To Jesus has added a new angle in this struggle. He asserts that there is too much "easy believism" where people are not really becoming Christians simply because they haven't faced the issue of **sin**. Consequently, Dr. MacArthur maintains that one must **willingly** choose to **surrender** every area of his life to Christ as a **condition of salvation!** (Bib. Sac., 146:581, p. 32) In other words, Christ must be **viewed** as **Lord OF all** in one's life before He can be **Lord AT all!**

To be fair with him, we must note that Dr. MacArthur is **NOT trying** to say that salvation is by faith plus works! He is **Reformed** in theology as was Luther and Calvin!

However, there are practical problems with his view: if Dr. MacArthur is right, (a) how do we know if every area of our lives is turned over to Christ's lordship so we can know if we are truly saved? (b) If someone discovers 25 years after believing in Christ that he unthinkingly failed to yield a corner of his life to Christ at salvation, but dies before yielding, will he fail to make it to heaven though he had believed in Christ's death, burial and resurrection for 25 years?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "We know from combining 1 Cor. 15:1-4 with Ephesians 2:8-9 that if we believe APART from WORKS that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again, we will be saved! However, a new idea says we must make Christ LORD of all areas of our lives in order to go to heaven! How can I know for SURE?!"

- I. **Christians have offset efforts to add works to faith for salvation:**
 - A. The Early Church offset the pressure of Judaizers who demanded faith in Christ plus circumcision for salvation, Acts 15:1-2, 7-12, 13-20.
 - B. The Reformers countered the Roman Church's belief that faith plus the works of the sacraments were needed for salvation, cf. Eph. 2:8-9.
 - C. Modern cults (Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, etc.) promote faith plus works, being countered by Evangelicals who use Ephesians 2:8-9.
- II. **However, a view championed by John MacArthur adds a new angle, stating that though one is saved by faith, he must also submit to Christ's LORDSHIP in his life in order to be saved.**
- III. **Accordingly, we examine this view in light of Scripture to discern just WHAT we must do to receive Christ's gift of eternal life!**
 - A. "Making Christ Lord of all" cannot be a condition for salvation, for Scripture records people who do **not** submit to Christ's rule in all of life and who are nonetheless still considered justified before God!
 1. Though calling them "saints" in Ephesians 1:1, the Apostle Paul revealed in Ephesians 4:30 that these same "saints" were **not** experiencing the full "lordship" of Jesus in their lives:
 - a. The command to "grieve not the Holy Spirit" is a present imperative with a subjunctive prohibition in the Greek New Testament, UBS Greek N.T., p. 673.
 - b. This grammatical construction reveals a command to **stop** a **current** state, Blass-Debrunner, A Gram. of the N.T., p. 172.

- c. Thus, these believers were sealed with the Spirit **while** grieving that Holy Spirit and failing to submit to the lordship of Christ!
 2. Paul called the Corinthian believers "sanctified in Christ Jesus" in 1 Cor. 1:2 though declaring them to be so "carnal" that they **lived** as *unsaved* people do, 1 Cor. 3:3 (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn.).
- B. Since "making Christ Lord" is **not** the **condition** of salvation, we check Scripture to understand the Lordship of Christ over men:
1. As MacArthur **correctly** asserts, one may often **confess** Christ as Lord at the point of salvation, Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:21, 36; 16:31.
 2. On the other hand, a person can submit to Christ's Lordship in all of his life **only** as a **product** of the **indwelling** Holy Spirit's **control**:
 - a. Paul admitted as an Apostle that he could not **by himself** live a righteous life, Rom. 7:15-24 (cf. John 15:5b).
 - b. However, he relayed that the Holy Spirit caused him to live out the righteousness of God in his **experience**, Rom. 8:3-4.
 - c. Similarly, the Galatian Christians were told of a war of control in themselves between their sin natures and the Spirit, Gal. 5:17.
 3. *Now, the Holy Spirit **regenerates** and **begins to indwell** a person **after** he **believes** in the *gospel* of **Christ**, Eph. 1:13; Jn. 1:12-13.
 4. **Since one is saved by trusting that gospel apart from works (Eph. 2:8-9), and since the Holy Spirit does not regenerate or indwell him before that event so as to equip him even to achieve it, the unsaved has no way of "making Christ Lord of all"!**
 5. Thus, "making Christ Lord of all" has to be a **post-salvation** event!
 6. We now summarize these observations on Christ's Lordship:
 - a. When one believes on Christ, "confessing" Him as Lord (cf. Rom. 10:9-10), he is **positionally** made a subject of Christ.
 - b. However, the **believer** must willfully choose to want to have Christ ruling all areas of his life in his **experience** (1 Peter 3:15 NIV) so that his **experience** can start to match his **position**.
 - c. Since the believer can do so only under the Holy Spirit's control, he must (a) confess sins (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) depend on the Spirit's control (Gal. 5:16-23) to (c) obey Christ's Word, 1 John 2:3-6.

Application: *To gain eternal life, (1) believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, that He was buried and bodily arose from the dead, 1 Cor. 15:1-4. The instant we make this decision, we belong to Christ, and He is our POSITIONAL LORD, Eph. 1:19-23. (2) Then, FOLLOWING this commitment that takes one into Christ's fold, we fellowship with Christ by (a) confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) dependence on the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) to obey Scripture (1 Jn. 2:3-6). (3) In so doing, we SUBMIT EXPERIENTIALLY to Christ's Headship in all of life.*

Lesson: *To receive eternal life this Easter, we must BELIEVE ALONE on Christ's death for our sin, that He was buried and bodily arose from the dead. Adding any WORK or any COMMITMENT as a condition other than faith detracts from God's grace, and counters the true Gospel!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

In 1948, fifty years ago, Lewis Sperry Chafer who founded Dallas Seminary wrote out of a concern in his day about false views of the Gospel that were creeping into the Christian community. His words ring like a bell on the issue before us today. We quote his third volume on Soteriology in His Systematic Theology, p. 392-393:

" . . . the New Testament declares directly and without complication in at least 150 passages that men are saved upon the sole principle of faith . . . it is **not** a matter of believing and repenting, of believing and confessing Christ, of believing and being baptized, of **believing and surrender to God**, of believing and confessing sin, or of believing and pleading with God for salvation, but it is believing **alone**. . . 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'"

This Easter Sunday, if you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins, was buried and bodily arose from the dead, you will have eternal life!