

## Teaching That Corrects The False Gospel of “Lordship Salvation”

Upon first reading *The Gospel According to Jesus* I was struck by the audacity of such a title. No one today is commissioned to *add to* apostolic testimony of the teachings of Christ—or the grace gospel that was commissioned directly to and carried only by Paul. That “suggested red letter words” are offered on the premise any of us is qualified to presume, “If Jesus were here today, \_\_\_\_\_ is what He would say,” certainly stretches the limits of legitimate exegesis and expository preaching. Yet, a survey of the extensive writings advocating the requirements of the Lordship position indicates many scholars are willing to yoke the gospel of grace with this errant doctrine.

Dr. Ryrie lists in *So Great Salvation* words that are *misused* to teach the doctrines of salvation.<sup>1</sup> He demonstrates how these words actually *misstate* the gospel as first taught by Paul. The words, *repent, commit, surrender, denies, and turn from all sin* are legitimate biblical words when kept in their context without the conflated *admixture* of human ideas. To begin, Dr. Ryrie stresses we are to focus on the ground of our *justification*. This is the core of the Lordship Salvation issue. On what *basis* are we justified? And at least three other noted teachers agree with Ryrie’s teaching that “not guilty” is the verdict that flows from Calvary.

First, Harry Ironside’s teachings contrast the distinction of being “good enough to be *lost*” with being “bad enough to be *saved*.” If we fail to maintain the true gospel by *getting these reversed* we fail to honor God’s announcement that Calvary’s verdict is *not* a representation of whether *we are in fact guilty or innocent*—since *all are* guilty before a perfect and holy God. But it is *in the light of the Cross* that we are *judged*, i.e., and only on the basis of Christ’s perfect sacrifice. This is how we are exonerated of our debt. Debt is cleared and paid *by Him alone* and by nothing we “do.” R. W. Newell also explains God’s favor. Newell’s *Book of Romans* stands against slavish lordship theory that puts the *cart*—that *carries*—*before* the horse—that *works*. Grace (the horse) does the work to bring the sinner, (the carried cart), to eternal life—and that without *any cause* of grace found *in* the cart—any cause *except* this universal element: a sinner’s

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<sup>1</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe in Jesus Christ*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 21.

*abject need*. Finally, Lehman Strauss reminds that it is *only* this consuming need based on man's helpless state that *allows us to bring that need* and lay it at the foot of the cross.

Ryrie and others' correction of Lordship Salvation is the annoying *itch* that can't be *scratched* by the advocates of the false gospel of Lordship salvation. Bristling at the rest and relaxation afforded those born again according to John 3:3, 5, and 7 —*law keepers* never cease attempts to chip away at the *free grace* of biblical salvation. They do not accept the *security* afforded the believer is only by virtue of the *integrity* of the gospel. Positional standing that is provided *by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone* leaves no room for man's reformative "goodness" added for extra measure. There are no strings attached to our salvation —no tethers on our free *identity in Christ*. "He will not deny even *unprofitable* members of His own body. True children of God cannot *become something other than children*, even when disobedient and weak. Christ's faithfulness *to His body and bride* is not contingent on her faithfulness *to Him*.<sup>2</sup>

While *security* is certain, it is nonetheless true that self-identified *assurance* may not follow without the believer maturing. Ryrie lists key causes of *lack* of assurance: inability to pinpoint the *moment* of salvation; lack of confidence in one's *expression* of salvation (lack of witnessing according to Acts 4:33); or feelings of guilt over sins committed *after* salvation. (These must be confessed for the sake of *fellowship —but do not threaten salvation*).<sup>3</sup> There certainly are outward behaviors that may not signal lack of true conversion but still indicate need for correction. These are addressed by Radio Bible Class in a short tract.<sup>4</sup> And a thorough and easily comprehended teaching on the assurance of salvation is William MacDonald's *Once in Christ, Forever in Christ*. Every conceivable "but" that is imposed by legalists is covered in simple explanations by MacDonald.

What the Lordship salvationist fails to grasp is the mysterious nature of the Galatians 2:20 life —that irrefutable security afforded by a life dead in Christ. Comprehensive teaching on

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<sup>2</sup> A. Duane Liptin, "2 Timothy," Vol. 1, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 1:748, cited in *So Great Salvation*, 130, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> *So Great Salvation*, ?

<sup>4</sup> See "10 Reasons to Believe Christians Can Look Like They Are Not", accessed at <http://discoveryseries.org/ten-reasons/christians-can-look-like-they-are-not/>.

Paul's cure for Lordship salvation is expounded upon in the entire body of work by Miles J. Stanford. His first book, *Principles of Spiritual Growth* is now available as *The Green Letters*. Stanford contrasts both the mystery and the majesty of the spiritual life subsumed in Christ with the many teachings that betray Paul's simple message, "Not I, but Christ." But while this and other sound scriptural corrections of "work salvationism" continue —advocates of the false gospel of Lordship salvation persist in advocating we work our way to heaven.

Even more convincing than scholarly affirmations of the security of the believer is the simple confidence shared with me by an elderly mountain woman. I gained from her wisdom when I visited and rocked with her on her cabin porch. She had ten grown children, the youngest of which 'answered the call' to preach. All the children had been raised according to independent, fundamental Bible doctrine. I asked her one day about the story I'd heard that her howl from the holler could be heard for miles the day her baby boy told her he'd changed his mind about the security of the believer *who failed to obey the Lord*. (I'd heard him remind others there are 1,420 qualifying "ifs" in the King James Bible.) When he began to pastor a small Church of God fellowship he wanted to break it easy to his mother that he no longer held to her beliefs. I asked Gramma Thurlia what she thought about this since I shared her strong conviction that when we are placed in Christ we are sealed for eternity. She paused and reflected, telling me what made sense to her as a farm woman with no learning except the Bible. She described our security in Christ by saying, "I know the Lord goes to *far* too much trouble to catch fish to *ever* throw even *one* of them back" (John 10:29 and John 17:11).