

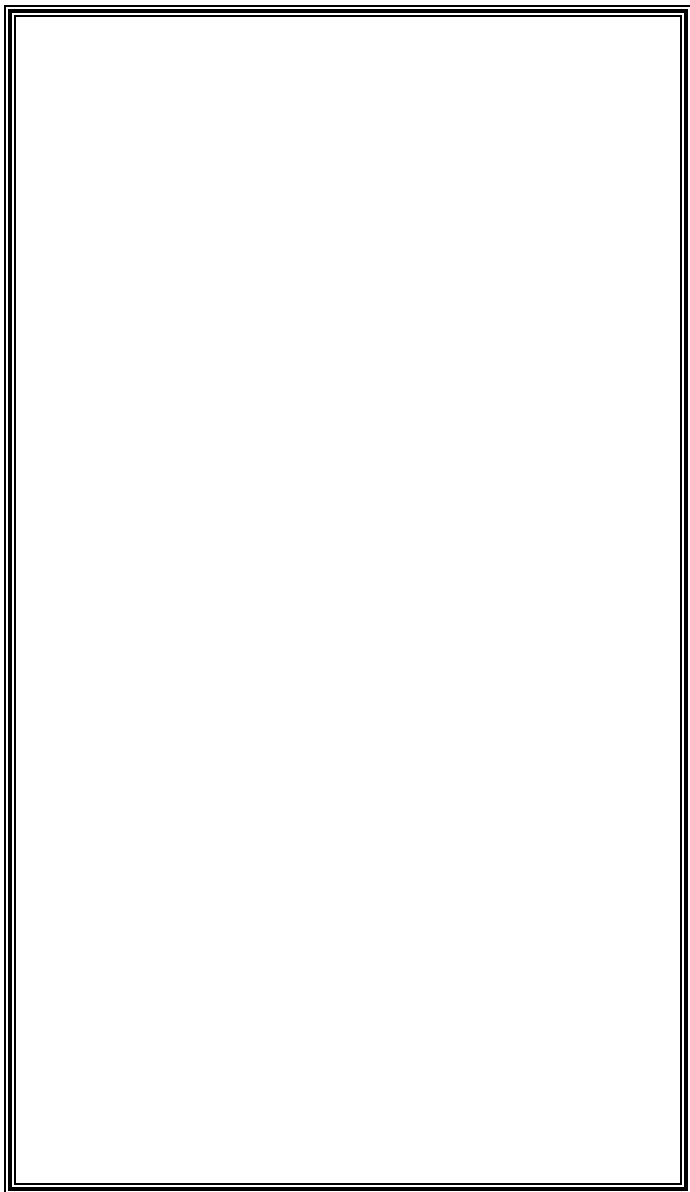
Investigating

Lordship

Salvation

A Free Grace Response to
a Works-Based Salvation

Daniel Weierbach



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Dedication

To all those people who had a role in my discipleship, as well as those who debated me.

Thank you for you have helped push me to become a Berean.

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Preface	iv
A cursory Synopsis	6
Preservation vs Perseverance.....	5
Works-A Litmus Test for Conversion?.....	13
The “Art” of Eisegesis	17
“By Their Fruits”	22
The Parable of the Soils.....	30
“I am the Vine”	40
“Examine Yourselves”.....	52
The Charge of Antinomianism	58
Conclusion	65
Resources	69
Scripture Index	70

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There are numerous people who have made this book possible. First and foremost, I give thanks to my God, Jehovah Shalom, the Lord of Peace, who has revealed His love, mercy, and grace to me, by revealing my path towards eternal darkness, revealing truth. I give thanks to Jesus, who died a substitutionary death for my eternal life, and for the Holy Spirit, who teaches, convicts, and assures me of God's love.

I also give thanks to my wife, Rebecca, and my children, Gauge and Alyssa, who have given me the opportunity and time to work on this writing. I have spent countless hours in reading, studying, and typing, as they waited for time to spend with me; as well as the encouragement and constant prayers regarding this work. Along with my wife, I also thank my mother and father (Randy and Debbie), my brother (Ben), and my Pastor Ken, for their critiques and words of encouragement, as well as Matt for the cover design. Many times, I was discouraged and felt, "what's the point," but they continued encouraging me in the path I felt God was leading me. Finally, I give thanks to those who hold the Lordship view, whether knowingly or unknowingly, and have challenged me in my belief. For with their interjections, I had the drive and determination to search the Scriptures to see whether those things were so (Acts 17:11).

Preface

I do not claim to be anyone of importance, nor do I claim to have figured everything out and understand all theological doctrines. I am simply a man who found eternal life through my Savior, Jesus Christ, back in February 2009, and since then, I have been on a pursuit to try and understand theology, and how it applies to my life.

I have spent countless hours speaking with various people who hold different views on what Scripture says and have discussed Calvinism with many people. There was one moment in my discussions with others that I realized I was doing exactly what I charged others with doing: regurgitating a view which I had heard and espoused. I was also confronted with the emotional side of Calvinism, that it made God appear as less of a loving God, and more of a cruel God, creating some people knowing they would end up in hell because He did not sovereignly predestine them for eternal life. I thought, how could God create people that He sovereignly does not choose for salvation?

Regardless of how I felt about the teaching, I set out to study and determine to see whether it was exegetically sound. I have spent many hours

studying every side of Calvinism, to include some of the most widely used passages that seem to justify its doctrinal truth, and some of the greatest advocates of the doctrine such as John MacArthur, John Piper, and A.W. Pink.

This book is a portion of my personal studies, and I have learned that the position of Lordship Salvation, which is a part of the Perseverance of the Saints tenet of Calvinism, is anything but a Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that all presuppositions and biases are placed aside, and an open, honest consideration is made regarding this subtle works-based salvation.

~ Daniel Weierbach

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

Chapter One

A Cursory Synopsis

Whether one believes it or not, Lordship Salvation is an unbiblical teaching, and can be tied to the Calvinistic tenet of Perseverance of the Saints, which lies in stark contrast to Preservation of the Saints. The Lordship Salvation teaching espouses that one must make Jesus Christ the “Lord of their life” or they are not truly a “genuine” Christian; these pseudo-Christians are commonly referred to as “professors” and not “possessors.” Unfortunately, this teaching has crept into many churches. I pray through this book you will see that Lordship Salvation is no Gospel at all, as it removes one away from the great grace of God (Galatians 1:6-9), and places emphasis on an individual’s work to maintain eternal life, boasting in self rather than the grace and love of God.

The Founder and Executive Director of the Grace Evangelical Society, Dr. Robert Wilkin, identifies one of the central tenets of Lordship Salvation is that “saving faith is intricately tied

to good works.”¹ He goes on to explain that the Lordship crowd teaches “saving faith necessarily includes or results in good works”², and “if a person has faith in Christ, yet does not produce enough works, he will not be saved.”³ This common message from the pulpit is veiled because, as this author agrees, works should be evident in a Christian’s life, although at times works do not follow.

How can a believer, who was saved from an eternity away from the goodness of God, ever continue in sin (Romans 6:1-2)? Or how can a believer ever trample on the great grace of God?

However, just because works should follow, does not indicate works always will, or that works will be consistent in a believer’s life. This is seen in the New Testament where Christians are commonly admonished to perform, or continue in, good works. In the Greek, this admonishment is commonly seen in the subjunctive mood, or the mood of possibility (i.e. “should” as seen in 1 Corinthians 12:25; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 2:21).

¹ Robert N. Wilkin, *Confident in Christ: Living by Faith Really Works* (Denton TX, Grace Evangelical Society: 1999), 179.

² Ibid, 180.

³ Ibid.

“ ...YE WERE ...
REDEEMED ... WITH
THE PRECIOUS
BLOOD OF CHRIST, AS
OF A LAMB WITHOUT
BLEMISH AND
WITHOUT SPOT”

(1 Peter 1:18-19)

Notes

Chapter Two

Preservation vs Perseverance

According to Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary, preservation is “the act of preserving or keeping safe; the act of keeping from injury, destruction, or decay.”⁴ The definition of the word highlights the significance of “keeping,” which is defined as “holding, restraining, preserving, guarding, protecting, and performing.”⁵ From this definition, we see in Scripture that a Christian is “preserved” by God’s work, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Much emphasis is placed on the Holy Spirit’s role of giving spiritual gifts, but little is mentioned regarding His preserving and illuminating role in the life of a believer. The Holy Spirit’s preserving work through Christ is evident.

A believer’s preservation by the Holy Spirit is a point of emphasis throughout the New Testament, seen in three divisions. First, understand that many have a misunderstanding of what one gains upon reconciliation to God. When someone places their faith in Jesus’ sacrifice for their

⁴ <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/word/preservation>.

⁵ <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/word/keeping>.

sinfulness, seeks forgiveness, and trusts in His resurrection, they don't simply receive salvation, they receive eternal life (John 3:16). In other words, believers are not promised "salvation" upon belief in the finished work of Christ, but rather believers are promised "eternal life." The distinction is that the former leads to the latter. It is then, at the moment of placing faith in Christ pass from death to eternal life (John 5:24). Also note that whenever eternal life is received, it is referenced in the present tense (John 3:15-16, 3:36, 5:24; Acts 16:31).

Secondly, eternal life is said to have been sealed by the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion (John 14:16-17; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Peter 1:5). This sealing of the Spirit is considered the "earnest of the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 1:22), "earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14), and one's identification with Christ (2 Timothy 2:19). Furthermore, the Spirit is the witness to an individual that they are saved (Hebrews 10:14-18).

Finally, seeing as the Spirit indwells a believer upon conversion, and that the Spirit is the sealing of a believer to God's family, we finally determine the length of the sealing. a believer is

sealed until: redemption (Ephesians 1:14), the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30), the last time (1 Peter 1:5), with each identifying this sealing as lasting until the rapture (John 6:40). The Holy Spirit's indwelling presence is part of God's precious promise to those who place their faith in Him, that He will never cast them away (John 10:28).

The same dictionary defines perseverance as a "persistence in any thing undertaken, continued pursuit or prosecution of any business or enterprise begun."⁶ In other words, perseverance can be viewed as staying in a particular state or venture. This word is found only one time in Scripture, in Ephesians 6:18, where a Christian is admonished to watch "with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."⁷ Here in the latter portion of the sixth chapter of Ephesians, Paul

... preservation has to do with God's work toward man and perseverance has to do with man's work toward God

is reminding the believers at Ephesus of the role spiritual warfare plays in their life, and their need to don God's spiritual armor. All pieces of the armor must be

⁶ <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/word/perseverance>

⁷ All passages taken from the KJV

figuratively put on, should a believer wish to stand a chance against the unseen warfare, but he highlights that while the armor may be donned, he or she needs to *watch* “with all perseverance;” the Greek word is *proskarterēsis*. It is evident with this one-time usage of the word “perseverance” that it has nothing to do with eternal life, or the maintenance thereof.

So, what does Paul mean to watch “with all perseverance?” Simply that a Christian needs to be always mindful of the fact that some of the trials, pains, and struggles we have in life, whether physically, emotionally, financially, or relationally, could well be from the result of a spiritual battle going on in our lives with the adversary or his followers. We are admonished to “persevere” in this watching of the trials of our lives. This single use of the word has nothing to do with Soteriology but rather with Satanology, and his role in affecting a believer’s life.

Many times, the term “endure” is used to promote the idea that a Christian needs to endure in the faith until the end, otherwise they are not a “genuine” Christian. But a contextually reading of these few passages (Matthew 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13) reveal that the enduring brings physical salvation and not a spiritual salvation

(i.e. Matthew 10:22 - from the AD 70 judgment in Jerusalem, and Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13 - the physical destruction in the Tribulation Period).

One fallacy in hermeneutics is believing a word carries the same meaning each time it is used. Such is the case with disciple, fire, gospel, and salvation. In Scripture, a disciple does not always refer to a believer (John 12:4), fire is not always symbolic of hell (1 Corinthians 3:13), the gospel can simply mean “good news” not referring to Christ (Romans 1:1), and salvation can refer to physical deliverance rather than spiritual (Philippians 1:19). An honest and diligent student of God’s word will study the immediate context as well as the book and Bible context. An erroneous interpretation of enduring unto the end places the maintaining of eternal life on an individual’s works rather than on the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Finally, as Dr. Laurence Vance points out, in *The Other Side of Calvinism*, a Christian may not always persevere; they may: “depart from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1), err from the faith (1 Timothy 6:10), err concerning the faith (1 Timothy 6:21), deny the faith (1 Timothy 5:8), make shipwreck of the faith (1 Timothy 1:19), swerve from the faith (1 Timothy 1:6), and not continue in the

faith (Colossians 1:23).”⁸ Two examples of Christians who fell away from their faith, and were subsequently reconciled, are John Mark (Acts 15:37-38) and the fornicator in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 5:1). These two examples reveal the fact that perseverance is an ongoing battle with many Christians.

Unfortunately, much has been made regarding an individual’s role, not only in persevering in the faith, but also being preserved in the faith. This is a sad and unfortunate teaching, which removes one’s assurance of eternal life and places it into the hands of the individual to maintain, a means for individual boasting. Dr. Wilkin gives the following illustration in *Confident in Christ*:

“Let’s say Phil and Bill are both believers. Phil perseveres and goes to heaven. Bill doesn’t and goes to hell. Whether we say that Bill lost his salvation, or that he proved to be a false professor, he doesn’t make it because he didn’t persevere. This would, however, give Phil a ground for boasting. He could legitimately say

⁸ Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Lincolnshire IL, Vance Publications: 1999).

that he got into heaven because he persevered in good works.”⁹

It is important to remember that preservation has to do with God’s work toward man and perseverance has to do with man’s work toward God. Unknowingly, those who promote perseverance as a requirement as a sign for genuine salvation, are no different than those who teach that works are needed to gain salvation. It is the same metaphorical horse; the only difference is the location of the cart.

⁹ Robert N. Wilkin, *Confident in Christ: Living by Faith Really Works* (Denton TX, Grace Evangelical Society: 1999), 133.

Notes

Chapter Three

Works - A Litmus Test for Conversion?

As Dr. Wilkin stated earlier, works are commonly viewed as a litmus test for a “genuine” Christian; but is there any biblical validity to this claim? It is one thing to emotionally, experientially, and presuppositionally believe that works must follow conversion, but since we all will give an account to Jesus of what we believe and teach, should we not test the accuracy of this message, according to God’s immutable word?

One would be hard-pressed to find in Scripture that believers are called to judge another’s salvation by their works, or the fruit they bear (or do not bear). A Christian is called to hold another Christian accountable if they are not living like Christ, so long as they are not being hypocritical (Matthew 7:1-5), but this accountability is in their fellowship with God, not their soteriological standing with God. If one attempts to prove that genuine salvation is based upon a work, they have to ignore the context of the passages.

For instance, the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) can externally be seen in unbelievers, those who are anathema; many people exhibit

love, joy, peace, gentleness, etc. On the flipside, one can see the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21), at times in a Christian’s life also.

Whether looking at oneself, or trying to judge another’s testimony, one cannot discern their motivation or whether it is borne of the Spirit or the flesh. Paul reveals in his letter to the Corinthians that it will be the coming of the Lord that will “reveal the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart” (1 Corinthians 4:5). What may appear to be good fruit borne by a believer, may actually be selfishly motivated, and thus not regarded by Christ.

The revelation of works being a false indicator of salvation is evident, seeing as “false apostles, and deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” appear as “ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:13, 15). These unbelievers definitely give the appearance of fruit, or works, without the indwelling of the Spirit. Unbelievers can give the appearance of being saved. That should not surprise any Christian for even “Satan is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Subjectivity is the other area damaging to the notion that a Christian must bear fruit to be saved.

It is subjective in the sense that no one has been able to answer two questions regarding this teaching:

- 1) How many works must be done?
- 2) How often must works be done?

The answers to these questions elude all those who seek them, for nowhere in Scripture does God record how much, or how often, fruit must be produced to test the genuineness of conversion. In the Lordship Salvation message, it is an affront to God that He is charged with offering salvation to whosoever will, while neglecting to tell them how to maintain the very salvation He is offering.

Therefore, works cannot be a litmus test to determine an individual's salvation for two fundamental reasons: 1) we can never see inside the heart to determine if the work is borne of the Spirit or flesh, 2) the quantity and frequency of works lies in obscurity and subjectivity.

Notes

Chapter Four

The “Art” of Eisegesis

Eisegesis is the art of making God’s word say what one wants it to say; an *art* because many times it takes considerable amount of effort and skill to divorce God’s word from its context, and apply it to a situation of which God never intended His word to be applied. This is commonly seen with Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,” in which one tries to claim this promise whether performing as an athlete or taking an exam, detached from the context of which Paul writes: from a Roman prison and that no matter whether he is rich or poor, free or bond, etc, he can be content through the strength of Christ.

I have heard it said that eisegesis requires mental maneuvering and theological gymnastics, and with this I unequivocally agree. Though I would say there are few Christians who abuse God’s word for personal gain, many misunderstand God’s word due to presuppositions they carry and an unwillingness to challenge one’s own belief.

Presuppositions are not a negative thing, for everyone has presuppositions about any given topic. Presuppositions become negative when one refuses to challenge his own. It is difficult due to an emotional attachment to the belief.

In illustrating this fact, consider one's journey through their first 18 years of their life. With childhood cartoons and movies, such as *The Land Before Time*, a child is indoctrinated early in regard to the age of the universe and the belief that dinosaurs went extinct around 70 million years ago. Then, as one goes through 12 years of public, state-funded education, the theory of evolution is taught as the fact of origins. Really starting to emphasize the evolutionary theory around the sixth grade with biology, they continue to dive deeper into this teaching for the next six years of school until graduation. With respected teachers teaching evolutionary curriculum as truth, most have no reason to question its veracity. So, once an individual graduates from high school, they have learned much about evolution regarding the origins of life; they have established their presupposition.

Now, suppose a crazy Young Earth Creationist like myself came along and promoted the notion that not only was this universe cre-

*Presuppositions
are powerful, and the
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to challenge.*

ated, but it was created a little over 6,000 years ago. How likely would one be willing to accept the truth of my evidence as opposed to what they have been taught for almost 18 years? Very unlikely since they have their presuppositions of origins through their 12 years of public education. Very unlikely indeed, unless they are willing to openly and rationally challenge their presuppositions in light of evidence presented, regardless if it points to the fact they have been misled for their entire life.

Presuppositions are powerful, and the pride in each of our hearts make it difficult to challenge. But if Scripture is truly God's word to you and me, we would do well to swallow our "pride pill," and admit, we may have been wrong in some areas, and try to seek the truth through logic and reason. I know how this "pill" tastes because I have had to swallow it a time or two, challenging my presuppositions, only to be persuaded I was incorrect in my belief.

Understanding the power of presuppositions, let us look at four passages that may challenge your original view of them.

Notes

Chapter Five

“By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them”

(Matthew 7:15-20)

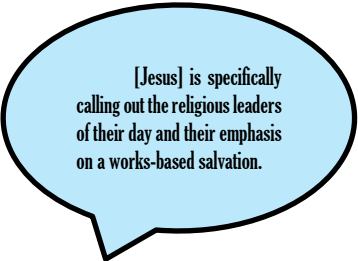
The Lord’s statement in Matthew 7:19-20 has been misapplied by many due to bringing pre-suppositions to Scripture. Already presupposing that a “genuine” believer will have works seen through a litmus test, it is natural to interpret this passage as such; but is that what Jesus is trying to point out? Reading this passage by itself, “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them,” does seem to point to the fact that a genuine Christian would be seen by their fruits. However, a diligent student would do well to determine the context of which our Lord is speaking.

Beginning in verse 15, Jesus offers a warning, “Beware of false prophets;” so it is apparent that he is about to speak regarding false prophets, or false teachers. Verse 15 through 23, there is the same thought and statement, only in verse 24 does Jesus sum up his entire sermon, seen by the conjunctive adverb “Therefore.” With this in

mind, one must understand the passage in order to interpret the verse; as the old adage goes *a text without context is a pretext.*

But first, what does this passage *not* say. This passage does not teach that the Christian is the “good tree bringing forth good fruit” (Matthew 7:17a) and the unbeliever is the “corrupt tree bringing forth evil fruit” (Matthew 7:17b) for two specific reasons. First, in verse 18, Jesus says that a “good tree **cannot** bear evil fruit” [emphasis mine]; I would go out on a limb and say that at some point in time all Christians have borne “evil” fruit. Whether this “evil fruit” is lusting, lying, hating, or anything else that displeases God, we see, not only in personal experience, but in Scripture that this is evident in a believer’s life (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5). Additionally, the fact that a Christian can bear “evil fruit” is seen in Paul’s admonishment of ungodly living (1 Corinthians 3:3, 5:1-2; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 4:31). As someone once said Christians “aren’t sinless, but sin less.”

What does this passage mean then? Again, the context of what Jesus is speaking about is regarding false prophets.



[Jesus] is specifically calling out the religious leaders of their day and their emphasis on a works-based salvation.

What is a false prophet? Simply put, a false prophet is one that teaches (prophesies) a message that is not in accordance with God's teaching, i.e. anything that is contrary to what Jesus is preaching. He is specifically calling out the religious leaders of their day and their emphasis on a works-based salvation.

These false prophets in verse 15 are the ones represented by the "corrupt tree" in verses 17 and 18. This is seen in verse 16 where Jesus states that you will "know them by their fruits;" with the subject being the false prophets, and their fruits identifying them. The tree represents a teacher who is either teaching the same message as Christ (good tree) or a message contrary to his teaching (corrupt tree). Therefore, a "good tree" (teacher) will always produce "good fruit," for his teaching preaches the message of Christ, while the "corrupt tree" will always bear "evil fruit" for the false prophets preach a message

contrary to Christ. The emphasis on the visible fruit is that one may know who the false prophet is (Matthew 7:16, 20), not the believer.

Zane Hodges draws a comparison of the Lord's rebuke here in Matthew 7 with that of Matthew 12:33-35:

“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by [his] fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”

Here Hodges shows the similarities between these two passages: of a tree and its fruit, with the tree in reference to the religious leaders who reject the Messiahship of Jesus, and the fruit, their false message, or teaching. In verse 34, Jesus makes the statement that these false teachers are *speaking* evil things, thereby identifying their fruit (teaching) as corrupt, and thereby making the tree (teachers) corrupt. Hodges states it as such: “A false prophet must be tested by his message. If he is inwardly corrupt and

ravenous this will stand revealed by the character and quality of his communications.”¹⁰

Those in verses 21 and 22 that are denied entrance into heaven are not those believers who were not “genuine,” but rather those false teachers who presented a different Christ. This aligns perfectly with the aforementioned six preceding verses as they spoke of a salvation that was not of the biblical Jesus Christ. Those who claimed to prophesy and do works in the name of Jesus were teaching, and believing in a Jesus that does not save, a Jesus that is anything but the second Person of the Trinity, Emmanuel, God with us. These “false prophets” are similar to those seen in the book of Acts, the “seven sons of one Sceva” who, trying to cast out a demon, were beaten, and fled naked and wounded from the house (Acts 19:13-16).

The question then remains, what is the “will of my Father” (in verse 21) that Jesus states that must be done for one to “enter into the kingdom of heaven?” Hodges, in “Grace in Eclipse,” points out that His will is for “them to trust His

¹⁰ Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards* (Denton TX, Grace Evangelical Society: 2016), 21.

Son for eternal life.”¹¹ John 6:40 clearly explains what Jesus meant regarding the Father’s will, “And this is **the will of him that sent me**, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” [emphasis mine]. The false prophets in this passage were trusting in their works to save them, when they needed to trust in the Savior.

In application, we may apply Matthew 7:15-23 to our lives today when we are listening to a preacher on the radio, television, or in the pulpit. If this individual is stating a message that is contrary to what Jesus Christ had taught, then by his words, message (i.e. “fruit”) we may know that he is a false teacher and to stop listening. This is commonly evident in the Mormon and Jehovah’s Witnesses cults who teach that Jesus is either the created spirit brother of Satan (Mormons), or the created Michael the Archangel (Jehovah’s Witnesses); by their fruit (teaching) you shall know them (false teachers).

Apart from presuppositions and eisegesis, a simple, literal reading of Matthew 7:15-23 will not teach a “genuine” Christian will be known by

¹¹ Ibid, 23.

their works, but rather a false teacher will be known by their message.

Notes

Chapter Six

The Parable of the Soils

(Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15)

The Parable of the Soils is a favorite of those who promote Lordship doctrine; it has been said to me, “if you want to determine one’s theological bent, see how they interpret the Parable of the Soils.” Within the Lordship camp, it is promoted that the fourth soil is the only true believer, seen in that soil producing fruits, “some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:23). They mention that this fourth soil is the only soil which is said to produce fruit. The second soil is typically said to not represent a genuine believer because they only persevere “for a while” (Matthew 13:21) and eventually fall away due to persecutions, while the third soil is not a genuine believer because it is “unfruitful” due to the “cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches” (Matthew 13:22). Let’s examine each of these claims.

Two significant things must be pointed out. First, it is of great importance when studying passages within the Gospel records, to determine if the same passage is mentioned by more than

one Gospel writer. For one must get the entire picture to make the appropriate interpretation and subsequent application. Just as a police officer will attempt to get different witness accounts of a crime to piece together the entire situation, such is a similar case with the historical records of the Gospels. This parable is mentioned in Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:4-15.

Second, Mark records a very interesting statement from Jesus Christ, namely that one's understanding of all other parables hinges upon their understanding of this one (Mark 4:13). So, biases and presuppositions must be placed aside, yet again, to seek a non-contradictory interpretation through systematic theology.

In regard to the Lordship interpretation of this parable, I must admit that I agree with the interpretation of the first soil, in which it does not represent a Christian. This is evident, as seen in Matthew 13:19 that this individual does not comprehend the Gospel message, and Satan takes away the message from his heart. Luke gives no misunderstanding when he records that the devil takes away the seed "lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12). But this is the only area of agreement I can lay claim to with Lordship advocates, for the following reasons.

Concerning the second soil, Dr. Wilkin points out the fact that the same Greek word is used in Luke 8:12 and 13, for “believe;”¹² the difference is that the first soil (Luke 8:12) did not believe while the second did. This is seen in the fact that Luke reveals that the result of the first soil not believing was that they did not get “saved” (Luke 8:12). It is quite logical to then reason that the second soil, due to their *belief*, was in fact saved. It is commonly taught in Scripture that “belief” is the only requirement for salvation, and Jesus stated that it is the only “work” that gives one eternal life (John 6:29). Regardless of the duration of belief, the moment of belief, eternal life is secured, which cannot be lost (John 6:37, 10:29; Ephesians 1:13).

In Matthew and Mark’s account, after tribulation and persecutions arise due to their faith, this soil stumbles (Mark 4:17). This is the same Greek word Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 8:13 in which he limits his Christian liberty of eating meats offered to idols, so as to not cause a brother, who is weaker in the faith, to stumble; it brings the idea of tripping or failing to progress. In other

¹² Zane C. Hodges, and Robert N. Wilkin, *Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?* (Denton TX, Grace Evangelical Society: 1999), 107.

words, in times of trials or persecution because of their faith, they cannot see God's sovereign hand and they turn away from God, or they cease openly practicing their faith for fear of ridicule.

In Luke's account there is a reference to this particular soil "falling away" (Luke 8:13). The Greek word used for *falling away* is the same Greek word, *aphistēmi*, used in 1 Timothy 4:1 "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall **depart** from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;" [emphasis mine] in which Paul mentions of the coming apostasy. Only a Christian can become apostate, for one must have faith to fall away, or depart from; God declares stern warnings regarding the apostate Christian (Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-27).

Therefore, the second soil hears the Gospel message, believes and receives the message, is persecuted and has tribulations because of their belief in the Gospel message, and withdraws.

Continuing on to the third soil, the seed was planted among thorns, and when it sprung up, it was choked (Matthew 13:7). It is held that these false professors are suffocated by the "cares of this world" and the "deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22) and as such, produce no fruit,

and prove not to be “genuine” Christians. Again, the emphasis is on perseverance and fruit, or lack thereof, as a litmus test of true conversion. But is that what Jesus says in this parable? That these soils produce no fruit and do not persevere?

We read in Matthew 13:22 and Mark 4:19 that this soil “becometh unfruitful;” know that in order to *become* unfruitful, one must have been fruitful in the past. Also, it is seen in Luke’s account, that it is not that this soil has never been fruitful, but that this soil does not produce *mature* fruit (Luke 8:14). This soil has produced fruit in the past, but it seemed to have stopped producing fruit, or stop producing mature fruit, due to the cares of life and deceit of money.

Luke provides an interesting insight, this soil is seen to have gone “forth” (Luke 8:14), Greek word *poreuō*, a reference to following a way or path; the fact that upon salvation, this person begins on the process of sanctification, following the teachings of Jesus. Somewhere along the way, this individual loses progress due to cares and deceitfulness of the world.

It must also be pointed out, regarding the second and third soils that each “received” the seed

(Matthew 13:5, 7) and it “sprang up” (Luke 8:6-8). Keeping with the agricultural illustration, as a gardener sows a seed in the soil, and the seed sprouts and begins to bud, regardless of how long the plant continues growing, or slowly withers and dies due to lack of nutrients or water, life was once there. This is the image we receive of the second and third soils. In this parable, the seed represents the Gospel, and the soil represents the hearer, the life springing up very well represents the reception of the Gospel message and conversion (1 Corinthians 3:5-7).

Finally, Lordship advocates claim that the fourth soil is the only picture of a “genuine” Christian, seen by the fact that it produces fruit. Again, the focus is on “outward evidence of an inward change,” i.e. fruit; as already discussed, judging eternity based upon external proves to be inaccurate as seen in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Additionally, we see that there is no timeframe on how often fruits must be borne, nor is there a requirement of the frequency of bearing fruit (all subjective). I imagine that all Christians, at times, succumbed to stumbling at persecution or tribulations due to their faith (Matthew 13:21), as well as being overcome by the “cares of the world” and the “deceitfulness of riches” (Matthew 13:22).

The fairer interpretation of this parable is that the first soil is the one who completely rejects the Gospel. The soil on stony ground (Matthew 13:5) represents the immature Christian that, upon persecution or trials because of their faith, no longer exhibits the faith they have for fear of being persecuted, judged, or ridiculed. The soil among the thorns (Matthew 13:7) represents the carnal Christian who, after salvation, becomes again entangled in the affairs of the world, and loses his focus on eternity and places it back on earthly.

This interpretation fits holistically when one realizes how much admonishment there is toward immature and carnal Christians (1 Corinthians 3:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:16; James 4:1; Hebrews 5:13, etc). Therefore, soils two and three definitely represent genuine Christian, but the ones that are admonished or rebuked to change, grow, and produce more fruit. In misunderstanding this parable, Zane Hodges makes a striking remark:

“A person who has believed in Jesus for eternal life, but isn’t living like a Christian, doesn’t need to be evangelized; he needs to be disciplined. But when we keep evangelizing the

saved, we end up confusing the born-again Christian who has believed and is saved. He begins to think he didn't believe the right thing because it "didn't take." And so he keeps on trying to "get saved," when what he really needs is to be disciplined. Unfruitful believers need instruction on the Christian life."¹³

¹³ Ibid, 107-108.

Notes

Chapter Seven

“I am the Vine, and Ye are the
Branches”

(John 15:1-11)

I have been told from one individual, who interpreted this passage as meaning a genuine Christian “will bear fruit,” as the “orthodox” teaching. And due to its orthodoxy, it was the reason he holds to that interpretation. But does orthodoxy prove accuracy? For a long period of time before the Reformation Period, it was commonly held that baptism was a prerequisite for eternal life. Martin Luther, though admired for his works on rejecting the Catholic church, continued this belief set, even went as far as promoting the idea that

“the infant prior to baptism is possessed by the devil and a child of sin and wrath, while baptism delivers him from the devil, making him a child of God. Before the sacrament is administered the baptizer commands the unclean spirit to depart to make room for the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴

¹⁴ D. Patrick Ramsey, “Sola Fide Compromised? Martin Luther and the Doctrine of Baptism.” *Themelios: An*

So, while this was an orthodox teaching within the church, it is still found to be unbiblical teaching. This goes to show that interpretation is not necessarily correct, simply because it is orthodox. Therefore, orthodoxy does not indicate accuracy, but simply reveals what a commonly held view is...nothing more.

It is a fallacy to believe a word means the same thing each time it is used, regardless of how many ways it may be defined. This is a common reason for misinterpretation of many passages. In every language, context must determine interpretation of a statement or thought.

Suppose you found a letter, and as you were reading the author wrote “that was the largest *trunk* I’ve ever seen!” What image would you have in mind? Would you picture the trunk of a vehicle? A trunk that you store clothes or belongings inside? Maybe a tree trunk? How about an elephant’s trunk? You probably would have no idea what trunk was actually being referenced. You could make a guess, and remove the possibility of an elephant’s trunk, because

it's not every day one see's an elephant, at least not in America!

Now suppose that in the letter, you read that the author was explaining his trip to the zoo. Now you have a little more background as to what possibly could have been referenced; but it still could be either of the four. Now suppose you read that the author was explaining his discussion with an elephant trainer, who was explaining the purpose, function, and anatomy of Bilbo the Elephant's trunk.

Now you could understand that the *trunk* being referenced in the letter is in relation to Bilbo's trunk. You were able to determine the proper meaning of the word because of the following context clues: 1) you determined all the possible meanings of the word *trunk*, and 2) you discovered the audience present within the letter, namely the elephant trainer. By determining the audience and the topic of discussion, you are able to correctly determine the appropriate meaning of the word *trunk*, in this particular instance. Context clues are vitally important in understanding the correct interpretation of a homonym.

The above example is the same process necessary to appropriately exegete Scripture; however, many times one focuses on a single meaning of a word, regardless of the possible range of meanings, and applies that meaning in all uses of the word throughout Scripture. One of the most common misuses of homonyms in Scripture is the word “fire.” It is commonly mis-

THIS ILLUSTRATION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ETERNAL LIFE, OR THE PERSEVERANCE OF “GENUINE” FAITH, BUT EVERYTHING TO DO WITH COMMUNION, FELLOWSHIP

interpreted as always in reference to hell, or the lake of fire. But a studying the word “fire,” it can carry other meanings, apart from hell, such as: God’s physical, destruction/judgment (Philippians 1:19; Isaiah 33:12; Joel 2:3; 1 Corinthians 3:13), or His purification process (Isaiah 43:2; Jeremiah 6:29; 1 Peter 4:12).

Understanding the abovementioned principle of interpretation, let us examine John 15. The apostle John is the only one who records this account, so we have the full picture without having to reference another author. Let us paint the background of this scene: it is nighttime, after Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper (John 13),

Judas Iscariot has departed to fulfill the sovereign work of God in betraying Jesus Christ (John 13:27-30), and then we see the conjunctive adverb “Therefore” (John 13:31). Once Judas departs, only the apostles (true believers) remain with Jesus Christ, Jesus remarks “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him” (John 13:31). There is no doubt as to who Jesus is speaking to at this moment as he calls them “little children” (John 13:33), a common reference to the children of God (John 1:12). Jesus’ conversation with the apostles, begins in John 13:31, but does not end until John 18:1, when they depart for the garden of Gethsemane.

John 15:1 Jesus uses the physical world to make a spiritual application, specifically a grape vine. Before going into the illustration, he explains two of his symbols: Jesus is the vine, and the Father is the Gardener. The common Lordship view on this passage is that those branches that do not abide in Jesus Christ, seeing as they are burned in the fire, a euphemism for hell, were not saved. This is interpreted as such due to Jesus’ words in verse 6 that “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire and they are burned.” Reasoning that Jesus is stating that an individual is cast into hell, i.e. “fire,” should they not abide in the vine, proving

themselves as “false professors” who were never “genuinely” saved. This Lordship view is coupled with verse 16, when Jesus said “I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain.”

Lordship advocates teach that if a believer is “genuinely” saved, then he has no choice but to continue to abide and do good works, proclaiming *evidence of their salvation*. So, the assurance is yet again placed upon the necessity of performing works by abiding in Jesus Christ, as a litmus test of true conversion through perseverance.

This cannot be the proper interpretation of Jesus’ words for numerous reasons. As we have already identified, his audience is the apostles minus Judas Iscariot; he is speaking to believers. In verse 5, Jesus clearly points out that the branches he is speaking of in verse 6 are the apostles, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” Should one interpret this passage as a branch that does not abide in Jesus Christ is cast off into hell, would promote the doctrine that one can lose their salvation, which is found nowhere in Scripture.

What is the main point of this passage? Abiding in Jesus Christ; the word “abide” (Greek *menō*) is used 12 times in this passage (John 15:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16). Abiding brings the idea of dwelling with, fellowshiping, or communal relationship, and here Jesus is admonishing the apostles to dwell with, and maintain fellowship, and communal relationship with him. He explains that if they are obedient to his commandments, they will abide in his love (v10). And that if they abide in him, they will “bringeth forth much fruit” (v5a). Jesus even goes so far to say that if the apostles do not abide in him, they can do nothing (v5b). Finally, unbelievers are never mentioned as being able to abide in Jesus without first having a saving faith. Unbelievers are unreconciled to God, and apart from His fellowship, standing as enemies (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21).

Two verses must be dealt with to maintain a true interpretation, verses 2, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away,” and the aforementioned verse 6. What is interesting about verse 2 are four letters, two words “*in me*,” [italics mine]. It was determined that the branches Jesus is referring to are the believing, saved, apostles (v5), and then in verse 2 he says that it is possible for a believing apostle to be taken away. What does he mean by the phrase “taketh

away?” Many unfortunately believe this phrase speaks of an individual that does not bear fruit, is cast off into hell, either not being able to work for salvation, or not producing the fruit as evidence of salvation. But, if Jesus is speaking to the eleven apostles, and has assured them they are clean, then that interpretation does not hold theological water.

Another interpretation of “taketh away,” is actually to *prop up*; the Greek word used here, *airō*, means to “lift up, or elevate.” Dr. John Niemelä reveals this agricultural fact through written records of Pliny the Younger, who describes this common practice in the first centuries; that vine-dressers would prop up “unfruitful branches onto stones to hold them above ground, so they would bear grapes the next year.”¹⁵ Applying to believers, Jesus’ phrase was assurance to them that when they needed support, had doubts, trials, and persecutions, that they would be elevated, propped up, assisted by God to be able to bear the fruit they have been called to bear. During these troublesome times, this was God’s message of mercy, not judgment.

¹⁵ John Niemela, *Jesus Props Up Unfruitful Believers* (Grace in Focus Articles: March 2014), <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/unfruitful-believers/>.

Finally, we arrive to verse 6, in reference to the branches being thrown “into the fire.” Going back to the illustration of the letter written about a visit to the zoo, we see that every word should be viewed through a contextual lens. For if we would argue that the fire is hell, and the branches being thrown there are people who have not borne fruit, then we wrestle with losing salvation, or maintaining our salvation by our works. However, when we see the other possible meanings for *fire*, we see that it may be in reference to God’s physical judgment upon an individual, or nation, not necessarily eternal. And in keeping with the viticulture illustration Jesus is using, it is reported that branches that have dried up, not able to remain in the vine, are taken down and cast into a fire, burned up because they were no longer useful.

In similar analogy, this fits neatly with Scripture where believers are admonished to “be careful to maintain good works” (Titus 3:8), to abide in the vine so as to be able to produce fruit, or good works (John 15:4-5), and that our fruit bearing is to glorify our God in heaven (John 15:8). However, should a Christian continually not abide in Jesus Christ, not remain in fellowship and communion, and become the prodigal, God issues

stern warnings about the life ahead (Hebrews 10:26-27; 1 John 5:16-17).

So, this illustration has nothing to do with eternal life, or the perseverance of “genuine” faith, but everything to do with communion and fellowship with God (i.e. abiding). Jesus encourages the apostles, moments before his arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, of the way they can remain fruitful and joyful, in the midst of their upcoming persecution and loss. The principle of abiding brings peace to the Christian, that no matter what circumstance one is faced with, maintaining communion with Jesus Christ, will allow for joy and the process of fruit bearing; then people will be able to “see our good works and glorify our God in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Notes

Chapter Eight

“Examine Yourself”

(2 Corinthians 13:5)

Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians is another passage used for a litmus test of genuine conversion “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownelves. Know ye not your ownelves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” Lordship Salvation advocates commonly mention the requirement

for a Christian to look inwardly to see if they are a true believer, bearing fruit and doing good works (again, subjective in quantity and frequency).

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ARE IN THE FAITH

One of the first rules of biblical interpretation is identifying the audience. In 2 Corinthians 13, looking at the immediate context, we see that Paul

calls these people beloved (12:19) and brethren (13:11). highlighting the fact that he is writing to

Christians, for these terms are not typically used in Scripture to refer to unbelievers. More proof of this is seen by Paul's address in 1 Corinthians 2:5, 3:5, 15:2, 11, 14, 17, 16:13; 2 Corinthians 1:24, 10:15. Additionally, the very letter is addressed to "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Therefore, in verse 5, Paul is admonishing these believers to determine, not if they are *in Christ*, but whether they are *in the faith*; there is a difference. A believer is said to be "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 3:28) upon salvation/conversion. However, this same believer can also be weak "in the faith" (Romans 4:19, 14:1), should stand "in the faith" (1 Corinthians 16:13), continue "in the faith" (Colossians 1:23), be established "in the faith" (Colossians 2:7), and be sound "in the faith" (Titus 1:13). Christian's are not admonished to remain *in Christ*, but only *in the faith*, pointing to the fact that a Christian will always be *in Christ*, but they may not always be *in the faith*.

The word "reprobate" used in verse 5 is an interesting word *adokimos*, and it is the same Greek word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9:27, about his not wanting to appear as a "castaway:" disapproved, or unfit, in his ministering. The antonym of this word is *dokimos*, found in 2

Timothy 2:15, “Study to shew thyself *approved* unto God” [italics mine]. This approval or disapproval will be visible at the Judgment Seat of Christ with either the reception or loss of rewards based upon faithful Christian service. Dr. Wilkin points out that Paul, who had no doubt of his assurance of salvation, was concerned with possibly being disapproved of by God at times in his walk.¹⁶

Regarding 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul is admonishing the Corinthian Christians to look inwardly and see if they are living holy and godly lives (“in the faith”), bearing fruit for God’s honor and glory, or if they are living carnal (1 Corinthians 3:3-4) or immature (Hebrews 5:13) lives as Christians. It is the same idea that James tells the “brethren” (15 times in his epistle, speaking to Christians), that faith needs to be active and operative, a Christian should not have a dead, or lifeless (inactive) faith.

Peter brings a similar point home that a Christian should be looking up for the return of Christ, and be diligent serving so we might “be found in him

¹⁶ Robert N. Wilkin, *Confident in Christ: Living by Faith Really Works* (Denton TX, Grace Evangelical Society: 1999), 66.

in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14), so we can hear “well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23) rather than rebuke and admonishment at the bema seat. And this is consistent with Paul’s epistles (Romans 14:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21, 6:7-9; Ephesians 5:5-7; Philippians 3:11-14; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 2:12, 15).¹⁷

A believer should regularly examine their walk with God, their relationship, similar to how one examines their relationship with their spouse, parents, or children (close, distant, hindered, fractured, etc). Blessings and fruit come from abiding in Christ, and abiding is a result of communion and proper relationship with God. But know that this examination is not to determine one’s standing in the family, but rather one’s relationship in the family.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Notes

Chapter Nine

The Charge of Antinomianism

Many times, a person who rejects the teaching of Lordship Salvation is charged with antinomianism. Antinomianism comes from *anti-*, meaning “against” and *nomos*, meaning “law.” Therefore, the most literal interpretation simply means “against the law.” Used as one of a few different derogatory remarks towards one who doesn’t hold to the Lordship Salvation theology, it is said that this view teaches that since we are no longer under the era of Law but Grace, that there is no longer a need for the Law today.

While I will admit some people hold to this teaching, it does not mean everyone does if they reject Lordship Salvation. I will even agree that those who hold to the position of antinomianism, do condone a form of sinful liberal sanctification, lifestyle, or hedonism. However, it is ignorant and unwarranted to say anyone who does not hold to Lordship Salvation espouses antinomianism, for this author rejects both.

That being said, what does Scripture say? Does God’s grace promote this view and lifestyle? If we are no longer under law, but under grace,

what purpose does the Law serve then? First, understand that though we are no longer under the Law of Moses, we are under a new law, the Law of Messiah. Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum reveals this concept from Galatians 6:2, and Romans 8:2¹⁸ and the fact that the Law of Moses was never meant to be permanent, but rather temporal, pending the coming of Messiah¹⁹ who disannulled the Law of Moses and ushered in the Law of Messiah. Under this new Law, “the believer...is free from the necessity of keeping any commandment of that system. But on the other hand, he is also free to keep parts of the Law of Moses if he so desires.”²⁰ This truth can be seen in Paul’s accounts in the book of Acts, 18:18, 20:16, and 21:17-26.

Regarding the Law of Moses, which most people mean when they charge one with antinomianism, Paul addresses in Romans 6:1-2. Here he writes about two purposes of the Law, one for unbelievers and the other for believers. For the unbeliever, the Law is the “schoolmaster” which shows them the need for Christ (Galatians 3:23).

¹⁸ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “The Law of Moses and the Law of Messiah,” A Messianic Bible Study from Ariel Ministries (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries), 1985, 12.

¹⁹ Ibid, 9.

²⁰ Ibid, 13.

It is the inability to please God in the fallen state which shows one their need for a redeemer. The Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 make up only 1.6% of the 613 total commandments of God. I surmise that everyone who have ever lived has broken all 10 commandments at one point in their life, and this is not factoring in the other 603 that remain. As the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 14:3, “there is none that doeth good, no not one,” and as Paul penned in Romans 3:23, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

As a parent with a child living within your home, you set the rules that they must obey; whether bed time, curfew, electronics, etc, it is your house, your rules. While your child is under your roof, your child will obey the rules of the home. The same holds true for the Creator of the universe, the only difference is that there is no other place to live other than under His roof, for He has created all. And since He has created all, to include you and me, He establishes the rules, and desires the relationship with all through obedience, trust, and faith.

To the believer, the Law is the standard by which we are to live holy lives. The Law, for a believer, brings blessings and discipline. Advocating that works are required for salvation negates the very promises of God’s discipline towards His

children. Hebrews 12:5-11 speaks of this fact, that there are times in a Christian's life that God has to discipline one to bring them to correction. The same is true of any parent that loves their child. As a father of two children, I have seen my children disobey on numerous accounts; don't get me wrong, they are excellent kids and we are blessed for how well-mannered and disciplined they are, but they still have their days. If I were to tell them to take care of a chore before I get home from work, and when I get home I see them doing anything but the chore I instructed them to do, they will be scolded. Now if I caught my children doing something that would cause them physical harm, there would be no scolding, but rather a more severe disciplining so they know the seriousness of the action they took that could harm them.

The same is true of God and us Christians, rebellion or disobedience brings the disciplining hand of our Creator. This is not because He is a tyrannical, egotistical God who requires constant obedience, rather, it is because He is a loving Father who desires the best for us. God's disciplining hand reveals the inconsistency of Lordship Salvation.

Then there is the Judgment Seat of Christ, otherwise known as the Bema Seat Judgment, spoken of in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. It is here that every believer will give an account of what they did with the gift of eternal life, this side of heaven. There will be a measurement of one's good works (gold, silver, precious stone) and bad works (wood, hay, stubble), and they will be tested by the fire, or judged by Jesus Christ. This judgment will most likely consist of what works were, and weren't done, along with the motive. It is specifically stated in verse 15 that there is the possibility of one's bad works outnumbering the good, but the eternal destiny of that individual has already been sealed by the Holy Spirit, for they "shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15).

So, as a believer, works are necessary to bring glory to God, remain in fellowship, and grow in sanctification. Works are not necessary *for* salvation but should be performed *because* of salvation.

Notes

Chapter Ten

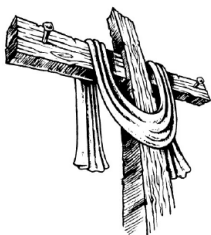
Conclusion

As previously stated, all Christians should strive to be bearing fruit and doing works for God's glory and honor, while being ambassadors of Christ living this temporal life. But I disagree that works, or fruit, should give evidence of one's salvation/eternal life because: 1) unbelievers can mimic these works, 2) works are subjective, 3) our eternal life is received the moment of salvation, 4) at that moment, the Spirit indwells us until the rapture or glorification, giving us the assurance of our salvation (2 Timothy 2:11-13). In looking inward to determine our fruits and works that "reveal" our genuineness, we are essentially boasting in those works and placing the assurance of our eternal life on the works or fruit that we claim, rather than on the finished work of Christ on the cross. We can only boast of our salvation because of what Christ did, not because any works show us to be a Christian because works can be deceitful (2 Corinthians 11:14).

God is gracious, merciful, and loving, and He offers to everyone the opportunity to receive the free gift of eternal life by simple faith in His

promise and work. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Have you accepted God’s gift of eternal life? If not, I pray you consider your works and realize that you have sinned, you have not lived a perfect life, and with a perfect Judge, the only ransom is a perfect payment. With the unfortunate bad things you have done in your life (just like everyone else on this earth), you need to pay the ransom, but your sacrifice is unacceptable because it is still covered in sin and shame. But the grace and love of God was shown, 2,000 years ago, by Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, who lived the life you and I couldn’t live, and died the



death you and I deserved to die, to pay the ransom you and I couldn’t pay. And he proved his love and perfection by rising from the dead on the third day, and ascending back into heaven, paying the cost of your sal-

vation.

It is by simple faith of accepting Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, that he died to pay your ransom, and by

his resurrection, you will have eternal life, that you can be assured of making heaven your home (John 3:14-16; 5:24; 6:40; 7:37-38; 10:28; 11:25-26; 12:46; 17:3; 20:31). I pray that you consider your standing with God, for He desires you to be reconciled with Him through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you have accepted God's free gift of eternal life, remain steadfast and sure in your security because of the promise of His faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:13), your present tense salvation (John 3:36), and the witness of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:15-18). I give thanks to my God that my eternal life is blessedly assured based upon His promise, faithfulness, and sacrifice, and I pray this revelation inspires you to live every moment in heartfelt gratitude for the high cost of the free gift of salvation God offers to you.

Notes

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