

THE GOSPEL LESSON 9

REVIEWING “LORDSHIP SALVATION” PART 3

REVIEWING THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION

We continue our examination of Lordship Salvation’s nine distinctives. In the previous lesson we saw how the first three distinctions

- Faith joined with repentance as behavioral change,
- Real faith as enduring and visible proof of genuineness,
- Saving faith as necessarily including personal commitment and following, effectively adding human moral response and performance to the condition for receiving/obtaining eternal life.

This stands in tension with the clear Biblical presentation that eternal life is a free gift received the moment a person is persuaded (believes) that Jesus is the Christ, who died on the cross for our sins, was risen from the dead, and gives eternal life as a gift (John 3:16, 5:24, 20:31; Eph 1:13).

Today we take up distinctions 4-6. These continue the same trajectory by claiming that real faith inevitably produces a changed life for the better, that the gift of eternal life includes all that pertains to practical life and godliness in the present, and that faith involves unconditional surrender to Christ as Lord. While each of these statements contains important truth about the Christian life, we will see that they are misapplied when made into conditions or tests for salvation (justification, having eternal life, reconciled to God). The result is a gospel that confuses justification with the will of god for the believer and makes assurance rest on the believer’s performance rather than on Christ’s finished work and promise.

Our aim remains the same: to let Scripture speak in its context. We will expose where the exegesis and synthesis of Lordship Salvation depart from the text, and we will reaffirm the simplicity and certainty of the gospel anchored in Ephesians 1:13.

DISTINCTION 4: REAL FAITH PRODUCES A CHANGED LIFE

The Claim

Real faith inevitably produces a changed life. Salvation includes transformation of the inner person, and the unbroken pattern of sin will not continue in the one who is born again. New birth produces a new nature and ongoing transformation; an unbroken pattern of sin is incompatible with genuine regeneration.

Key Scriptures Cited

2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:6; 1 John 3:9-10; plus John 10:27; 1 John 3:14; 1 John 2:3; John 15:14; Matthew 12:50; John 8:31; John 17:6; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 1:21-23; Hebrews 3:14.

Biblical Exposition

2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” This is a glorious truth. Union with

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Christ brings new creation life. The old position in Adam is replaced with new position in Christ. However, the text does not say that this new creation immediately or progressively eliminates sinful patterns or that an “unbroken pattern of sin” cannot exist in a genuine believer. Paul himself acknowledges ongoing struggle with sin in believers (Romans 7; Galatians 5:17), and the Corinthian church had serious sin issues (1 Corinthians 5, 6, & 11) yet were addressed as “saints” and “brethren.” The new creation is positional and is the basis for our progression into Christlikeness, we are motivated and encouraged to live in accordance with our new reality, but it is not automatic for believers.

1 John 3:9-10 – “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.” Lordship proponents read this as a test: if someone continues in sin without a changed life, they are not truly born of God. John is not giving a lifestyle test. He is drawing a sharp identity contrast between the children of God and the antichrists (children of the devil).

- **Sin/lawlessness** in this paragraph = the rebellion of denying that Jesus is the Christ (2:22; 4:3). Not generic moral failure.
- **Articular participles** (“the doing-one the sin,” “the abiding-one,” “the having-been-born-one of God”) identify *who* someone is, not what they habitually do.
- Everyone born of God (by believing Jesus is the Christ – 5:1) **cannot** commit that sin of denial, because His seed abides in him. Once born, you cannot become unborn.
- This is eternal security and assurance against the deceivers—not a command to measure your moral consistency.

Why Lordship advocates fail here:

They ignore the context (antichrists), the grammar (identity, not habit), and the book’s purpose (assurance, not introspection). 1 John 3:9-10 does **not** teach that real faith ends the pattern of sin. It teaches that real believers cannot revert to unbelief.

Other passages cited (John 8:31, 15:14, etc.) are exhortations to disciples who already believe, calling them to abide, obey, and bear fruit as expressions of their new identity, not conditions for receiving that identity. “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (John 8:31) is a statement about the mark of genuine discipleship, not a condition for eternal life. John 8:24 makes clear that the issue for eternal life is believing in Jesus.

The Problem with This Synthesis

Lordship Salvation takes descriptive and exhortative passages addressed to believers and turns them into tests that prove whether one’s initial faith was genuine. They read “an unbroken pattern of sin will not continue” into texts that do not say this. Scripture nowhere states that saving faith automatically produces an unbroken pattern of obedience or that any

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ongoing sin pattern disproves regeneration. Believers can and do fall into serious, repeated sin (David, Peter, the Corinthians, Demas). The new nature is real, but the old flesh remains, and progressive Christlikeness is a lifelong process based on Biblical Truth, motivated by grace, and takes consistency. Making “changed life” and “no unbroken pattern of sin” necessary evidence of genuine saving faith shifts assurance from Christ’s promise to the believer’s moral performance and consistency.

Why This Matters

This distinction can cause genuine believers who struggle with sins, addiction, or repeated failure to conclude that they were never truly saved, because their life does not show the “unbroken pattern” required. It robs struggling saints of the comfort of 1 John 2:1 (“we have an Advocate”) and replaces it with fear that their sin proves they are not children of God. It confuses the positional reality of new creation with the admonition and the call to positive volition for believers. The gospel announces that Christ has done it all; the one who believes has eternal life now.

DISTINCTION 5: THE GIFT INCLUDES ALL THAT PERTAINS TO LIFE AND GODLINESS

The Claim

God’s gift of eternal life includes all that pertains to life and godliness in this life, not just a ticket to heaven or future glorification. Eternal life is not merely forensic or future-oriented; it brings present resources for godly living as part of the gift itself.

To clarify, they mean that when one has eternal life, their life will immediately have a qualitative impact, and they will demonstrate that eternal life is a reality in their behavior.

Key Scriptures Cited

2 Peter 1:3; Romans 8:32

Biblical Exposition

2 Peter 1:3 – “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” This is a precious promise. God has given us, in Christ, all that we need for life and godliness. The “true knowledge of Him” is the means. We affirm that eternal life in Christ brings with it present spiritual resources. However, the text does not say that these resources begin to be appropriated automatically or by every believer, nor that the presence or absence of practical godliness in one’s life proves whether one truly possesses eternal life. Peter goes on in the same chapter to exhort believers to diligence in adding virtue, knowledge, self-control, etc. (vv. 5-8), showing that these things are to be pursued, not automatically possessed in full measure.

Romans 8:32 – “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” Again, another glorious truth of

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God’s generous provision in Christ. But what are the “all things?” In context refers to all that is needed for our ultimate good and conformity to Christ’s image (Romans 8:28-30). It also has glorification in context. This does not mean that every believer automatically becomes godly or has victory over sin at the moment of justification.

The Problem with This Synthesis

Lordship Salvation uses these verses to argue that since the gift includes “all that pertains to life and godliness,” a person who is not living a godly life either does not possess the gift or never truly received it. Their conclusion demands a strong inferential sequence of thought. They take a truth, then jump to the conclusion without any further collaborating evidence.

This collapses the distinction between justification (instant, complete, by faith alone) and the life of the believer (progressive, involving the believer’s walk and volition in response to the grace and truth of God). It makes present practical godliness necessary evidence of having received eternal life, rather than a pursuit that is motivated by having it. The gift does include all we need; it is contained in the Word of God; but growth in godliness is not automatic or instantaneous.

Why This Matters

This view can lead believers who are in seasons of struggle, immaturity, or slow growth in godliness to doubt whether they truly have eternal life, because they do not yet see “all that pertains to life and godliness” fully realized in their experience. It shifts the focus from resting in what Christ has given to anxiously measuring whether one’s life demonstrates sufficient godliness to prove the gift was received. Scripture presents eternal life as a present possession the moment one believes (John 5:24, 6:47). Growth in godliness is the lifelong journey of the one who has that life, not the proof that one has it.

DISTINCTION 6: FAITH INVOLVES UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

The Claim

Faith involves unconditional surrender to Christ as Lord. Jesus does not bestow eternal life on those whose hearts remain set against Him. Surrender to Christ’s lordship is not an optional add-on but central to the gospel invitation and the nature of saving faith.

Key Scriptures Cited

Romans 6:17-18, 10:9-10; James 4:6.

Biblical Exposition

Romans 10:9-10 – “Paul is not giving the condition for eternal life. He is explaining how the eschatological remnant of Israel (and believing Gentiles) will be *physically preserved* through the Day of the Lord.

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Context (Romans 9–11): Israel has stumbled; God is using the church until the remnant is saved in the last days (9:27, 11:26). “Salvation” (σῶζω / σωτηρία) here = deliverance/preservation from wrath into the Kingdom (Joel 2:32; Deut 30; Isa 10:22), **not** justification from hell to heaven.

“Confess... Jesus as Lord” (ὁμολογέω) means to openly acknowledge/declare the title “Lord Jesus.” It is not a vow of surrender or lordship commitment. It is the same as “call upon the name of the Lord” (v.13).

“Believe in your heart... God raised Him” means to be fully persuaded He is the risen Messiah.

Verse 10 reverses the order for clarity: Heart (kardia) belief → righteousness (justification) – Mouth confession/call → salvation (eschatological deliverance).

Verse 14 settles it: calling is only possible *after* belief. One must already possess righteousness before calling for deliverance.

Why Lordship advocates fail here:

They ignore the entire prophetic context (Deuteronomy 30, Joel 2), redefine “Lord” as personal surrender, and turn a future national-deliverance promise into a two-step requirement for eternal life. Romans 10:9-10 protects free grace; it does **not** make surrender the condition of saving faith.

Romans 6:17-18 – “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” This describes what happened to these Roman believers: they were slaves of sin but became obedient from the heart to the gospel teaching: the gospel is a truth proposition, not a call to behavioral reform. When one believes the Gospel, it results in freedom from sin’s dominion and becoming slaves of righteousness.

But they ignore the admonition to these believers in verses 12-14. How can Paul warn them not to do or continue in sin, and then state that they have already accomplished it? Being divorced from sin, freed from the master, does not mean that one could not return to their former master (May it never be).

James 4:6 – “But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” This is a general principle about God’s dealings with the proud versus the humble. It is not a statement that unconditional surrender is required before one can receive eternal life. Humility is indeed the posture of one who believes in Jesus because we are not elevating ourselves. James, however, is writing to believers (James 1:1-2) about practical Christian living, not laying down conditions for initial justification.

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The Problem with This Synthesis

Lordship Salvation takes the truth that Jesus is Lord and that believers are called to submit to Him and makes “unconditional surrender” a necessary part of saving faith itself. This again adds a subjective, internal commitment of the will as a condition for justification. It makes salvation depend in part on the sinner’s willingness to surrender all areas of life to Christ’s rule before or in the act of believing. Scripture presents salvation as a gift because of what Christ has done and promised; surrender and submission are the fitting response of the one who has been saved by grace, not the price of admission.

Why This Matters

This distinction can paralyze people who genuinely want to be saved but fear they have not surrendered “enough” or still have areas of resistance in their hearts. It turns the gospel into a transaction that requires the sinner to bring a sufficiently yielded will as part of the deal. In reality, the gospel calls sinners to believe in Jesus for eternal life. Those who believe are then confronted with the lordship of the One they have trusted, and the Spirit begins the lifelong process of bringing every area under His loving rule. Making surrender a condition for receiving life reverses this order and adds a work of human commitment to the finished work of Christ.

CONCLUSION

In distinctions 4-6, we have seen the same pattern we observed in the first three. Important truths about the Christian life (new creation and admonition to be more Christlike, the provision of all we need for godliness, and the call to submit to Christ as Lord) are taken from their proper place as exhortations to those who are already saved and are moved into the condition for receiving salvation itself.

The result is a gospel that requires the sinner to demonstrate or commit to a changed life, practical godliness, and unconditional surrender as part of believing unto eternal life. This confuses the instant, complete work of justification and leads to either frustration and defeat or to self-righteousness. It makes assurance rest on the believer’s moral transformation and yielding to God rather than on the objective promise of Christ and the seal of the Spirit given the moment one believes (Ephesians 1:13).