

THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH (*“Neutering The Gospel”*)

In recent years an “Easy Believism Gospel” has come to the fore in Evangelicalism that has an aversion to the idea of LORDSHIP in regard to evangelism. They speak of accepting Jesus as “Savior”, but never as “Lord”.

In their view accepting Christ as LORD is not NECESSARILY associated with salvation, and those who link it with salvation are often accused of teaching a “works salvation”.

However, he who defines the terms wins the argument. I know of NO evangelical Lordship proponent who actually espouses a “works salvation”. This would seem to amount to outright slander or extreme naivety. The real issue is THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH and what is involved in the RIGHT KIND OF FAITH. The right kind of faith is that borne of the Spirit as “no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:3).

Romans 10:13 is clear when it says, “Whoever calls on the name of the **LORD** shall be saved.” (Rom. 10:13). Acts 16:31 says, “Believe on the **Lord** Jesus Christ, and you will be saved”. Eph. 4:5 says that all true believers share in common “**one Lord**, one faith”. Paul’s conversion testimony involved “the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus **my Lord**” (Phil. 3:8). Paul recognized that the saints are those “who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ **our Lord**” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2) These and scores of other NT references make it abundantly clear that a true saving faith recognizes Christ as personal Lord as well as personal Savior (cf. the LORDSHIP theme in John - the Gospel of BELIEF – Jn. 20:28-31).

The cross of Christ can no more be divorced from His resurrection than His Saviorhood can be divorced from His Lordship. The cross declares Christ as SAVIOR. The resurrection declares Him as LORD (cf. Rom. 1:4, 10:9-10). However, “Lordless Gospel” proponents claim that a person can accept Jesus as Savior while at the same time rejecting Him as Lord. I categorically reject this error. Savior and Lord is a package! One can’t have Jesus as Savior while rejecting Him as Lord. Claiming “fire insurance” apart from faith in Christ as LORD is FATAL! (cf. Matt. 7:21-23) “Christ is Lord” is reckoned as the oldest creed in Christianity!

The “Free Grace [redundant I know] Movement” has been HOSTILE to “Lordship Salvation” (no matter how it is defined). But this movement has really gone off the rails. This movement not only advocates a “Lordless Gospel” but also came to advocate a “Crossless Gospel”. In seeking to reduce the Gospel to a “bare-bones minimum” they not only did away with Christ’s “Lordship” in salvation, but they also did away with His cross. As a leader in this movement, the late Zane Hodges pushed this “Crossless” gospel emphasis.

“The simple truth is that Jesus can be believed for salvation apart from any detailed knowledge of what He did to provide it.” – **Zane C. Hodges** (Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society 14 [Spring 2001], 12)

However, in recent days there has been a split in the “Free Grace” camp. Even some of them can’t stomach this “Cross-less” gospel. The idea that a person can be saved without any knowledge that Jesus died for their sins or rose again is indeed a heretical idea (cf. 1 Cor. 15). Some in the “Free Grace” camp think that all a person needs do is believe that Jesus guarantees him eternal life. Supposedly, a person does not need to know WHO Jesus is or WHAT He did for him (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2, 2:2, 1 Tim. 2:4). Such a person theoretically could believe Jesus for eternal life and then show up in heaven surprised to learn that Jesus died for him or her. It’s just as absurd to think a person doesn’t have to BELIEVE on Him as risen Lord.

Romans presents the most systematic presentation of the gospel found in the NT. **Without exception** Romans presents Christ as LORD of all believers (cf. Rom. 1:3, 5:1, 6:23, 10:12, 16:24, etc.) In Romans 14, in discussing the weaker versus the stronger brother/sister, Paul stresses that all have the SAME MASTER (v. 4). Ten times in Romans 14:6-14 this is brought out. When Paul says in Rom. 14:7, “*For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself*” he is describing normal Christianity.

It was to this very end that Christ died and rose again, “*that He might be **LORD** [emphasis mine] of both the dead and the living*” [in context speaking of all believers in heaven and on earth]. (Romans 14:9). All believers recognize the sovereign authority of Christ as seen even in the Great Commission (cf. Mt. 28:18-20). Both the weaker and the stronger believer live under the Lordship reality of Christ even if they struggle to live consistently with it.

Stripping the Gospel of either the Lord (His Person) or His Cross (His Work), amounts to NO biblical Gospel at all.