

Genuine Lordship Salvation

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Waterhouse

According to Waterhouse, “saving faith cannot exist with a total rebellion against Christ’s rule as Master.” This would seem to be quite in harmony with Jesus’ picture of those who suffer damnation in the parable of the minas as saying, “But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us’” (Lk 19:14). Would this not mean that in order to be saved you must want Christ to reign over you as LS insists. After all, Jesus seals their fate on this basis: “But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence” (Lk 19:27).

One would certainly be inclined to think that Waterhouse’s statement would be an endorsement of *Lordship Salvation* (LS), but this is certainly not Waterhouse’s intention, as he immediately follows up by clarifying, “However, this is not at all the same as concluding that there must be efforts to obey Christ as Master or commitments which promise a cessation from sin and a yielding to Christ’s authority.”¹ To contemporary LS this would sound like a Lordship Salvation that is devoid of Lordship, a worthless commodity. Waterhouse’s statements do not necessarily fare any better in the *Free Grace* (FG) arena since there are those in this camp who would assert that any demand that requires a lost person to submit to the Lordship of Christ by necessity negates the freeness of the offer.

So it would seem that Waterhouse’s remarks are worthless at best, showing him to be either a soft Lordship Salvationist or an inconsistent Free Grace Salvationist. Indeed, I consider him to be the latter. On the other hand, despite my overall impression of his work and my initial skepticism of his remarks on this particular subject, I have had occasion for reconsideration of the value of his position on this particular issue.² Although I would not necessarily articulate it in the same manner as he does, nevertheless, his comments above and his following summation are worthy of further consideration: “If a potential convert can **trust in** Christ, he has recognized Christ’s authority to a sufficient degree; he has made all the commitments he needs to make” (emphasis his).³

In his corresponding discussion in *Bread Alone*, he rejects the contemporary form of Lordship Salvation in favor of a biblical model. He again here enunciates the same key points: “It is unlikely that saving faith can co-exist with an attitude of total rebellion.” “One who trusts in Christ has already acknowledged His Lordship to a sufficient degree and has obeyed to a sufficient degree to obtain salvation.”⁴ Although Waterhouse builds his argument on the necessity of recognizing Christ’s deity, which is not affirmed by all quarters of the FG community, it would appear that there are other contemplations that should prevail even upon those in FG who do not share this premise or who seek to disassociate submission with regeneration.

Obedience of Faith

First, it should be readily admitted that saving faith is considered an act of obedience from a fully-informed biblical perspective. Conversely, lack of faith is considered disobedience: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (Jn 3:36). This Johannine chapter which commences with describing regeneration as new birth concludes by describing the faith necessary for regeneration as submission to the Son. Saving faith is synonymously equated with obeying the Son. John has no qualms affirming that faith is in fact commanded: “This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ” (1Jn 3:23).

Paul likewise describes faith as a form of obedience (Rom 1:5; 16:26). It is quite likely that Peter is portraying the same truth when he speaks of believers who have purified their souls by obedience to the truth (1Pet 1:22). In any case, both Peter and Paul concur that obeying the gospel is a salvific requirement (2Thess 1:8; 1Pet 4:17). Therefore, when we read of Peter’s announcement that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God (Acts 5:32), we are naturally inclined to think of regeneration via means of submission in the act of saving faith.

FG Advocates

But such conclusions have already been reached in FG literature. McCoy's article [Obedience Is Necessary To Receive Eternal Life](#) expresses this sentiment. [Wilkin](#) expresses the standard connection between Mt 7:21-23 and Jn 3:36 and concludes, "A person who trusts in Christ alone obeys completely the will of the Father to believe in Jesus Christ alone for eternal salvation." And of course, linking the Matthean and Johannine soteric requirement of doing the Father's will in Mt 7:21-23 with that of Jn 6:38-40 is standard FG fare. More pointedly, in his article [Obedience to the Faith](#), Wilkin commences by asking, "Must a person promise to obey God to have eternal salvation?" He concludes by answering, "Obedience to the faith specifically refers to obeying the command to believe the Gospel. If you've done that, you can be sure that you've exercised *the obedience of faith*" (Emphasis his). Is this not what Waterhouse has essentially said above?

Bing concurs with Morris in regarding the obedience of faith as "an exegetical or appositional genitive in which faith is the obedience called for... 'the gospel is seen as demanding the response of faith. Accordingly, the way to obey is to believe.'"⁵ To be sure, Bing rightly denounces lexical equivocation: "The evidence presented has suggested that the 'obedience of faith' spoken of in Rom 1:5 and 16:26 is obedience to the command to believe the gospel. Therefore, these passages should not be used to support the Lordship position that faith itself is in **essence** obedience" (emphasis mine).⁶ As to Acts 6:7, he acknowledges that Marshall may be correct: "*Obedient to the faith* means obedient to the call for faith contained in the gospel" (emphasis original).⁷ And we would certainly agree with his conclusion: "The **lexical** evidence and Bible passages do not support the Lordship **definition** of faith as obedience, willingness to obey, or submission" (emphasis mine).⁸ Therefore, even though saving faith cannot be defined as obedience or submission lexically, it is nevertheless a form of such theologically.

Invitation

The affirmation that saving faith is a form of submission to the Lordship of Christ is thus confirmed in FG literature. Submission to the Lordship of Christ is thus a logical requirement for regeneration. This is not to say that this perspective is always stressed in FG literature. But for that matter, it is not always stressed in the scripture either. Having just concluded in ch. 3 of GJ that saving faith is obedience to the Son, John proceeds to show Jesus offering the water of life to the Samaritan woman with no emphasis on the fact that faith is submission. Therefore, it is quite unlikely that she would have even regarded it as a form of submission.

Certainly, it is not necessary for converts to be consciously aware of everything that transpires in the moment of regeneration. They come under subjection to the headship and leadership (and therefore the Lordship) of Christ because they become a member of His body (Eph 1:22; 5:22-24). Yet they are probably not even aware of their new spiritual anatomy or lack of old self autonomy.

The converts may not even realize that "they are not their own" or that "they have been bought with a price" (1Cor 6:19-20) and that they have therefore changed Masters by trusting in Christ as their Savior. They may have changed Masters without even realizing it because they changed owners. In his section rejecting PLS, Bunge affirms GLS: "There really is no choice—a sinner who accepts Him as his personal Saviour also accepts Him as his Lord...When that same sinner gets saved, ownership changes. Now he is owned by the Lord Jesus because He bought him with a price."⁹

Surely most new converts are not aware that when they believed in Christ, they died in Christ. Yet Paul affirms that they have indeed died in Christ even if they are not aware of it (Rom 6:1-10). After driving this point home, he exhorts them to consider themselves dead (Rom 6:11). It is possible to be dead and yet not realize it. Paul wants them to be consciously aware of what has happened so they can take the appropriate action.

Similarly, it is quite possible that the past obedience to the faith that took place in Rom 6:17-18 took place at their conversion without their conscious realization that even their faith was a form of obedience. Much less did they realize that it was an obedience that resulted in their dying with Christ or becoming slaves of a new Master.¹⁰ Paul concludes these verses by informing them that at that past point in time: "You became slaves of

righteousness.” Then in the next verse he makes a transition to the present: “So now present your members as slaves to righteousness” (Rom 6:19). In the next chapter he uses marriage to illustrate the same point. At the point of conversion they changed masters (pictured as husbands) from the Law to Christ.

Consequently, in view of GJ and FG literature as a whole, Jesus’ omission of the full revelation concerning what would transpire in the woman at the well should not be regarded as a refutation of the fact that in taking the water freely she was additionally changing masters. She would no longer be a slave of sin but of righteousness. Much less did He need to explain that He would become her new Husband! But His lack of explanation and her lack of comprehension in no way negates the transformation or transition. In trusting in Jesus as the Christ (i.e. the Messiah) for eternal life, the woman was submitting herself to God’s will to receive eternal life by believing in Jesus. On that occasion, Jesus did not stress the fact that responding to His invitation was a form of submission, and it is doubtful that she would have perceived it as such. However, what was implicit on this occasion is made explicit in other junctions.

Coercion

John concludes his description of the eternal state in Revelation with a similar invitation: “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Rev 22:17). Once again the accentuation is on the freeness of the invitation to drink. But let us not forget that John commenced his discussion of the eternal state with the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:14-15). The offer is burn or drink. God does not force you to drink, but if you do not drink, He has made it clear that He will throw you into the Lake of Fire. If someone holds a gun to your head and commands you to do something, you are free to do otherwise. Just don’t think that you are free to ignore the invitation and not pay the consequences.

Royal Invitation

Bing accepts Morris’ assessment: “The gospel is a message of good news, but it is also an invitation from the King of kings. Rejection of the gospel accordingly is disobedience to a royal invitation.”¹¹ Let us not think that we are free to reject this royal invitation without paying dire consequences. Jesus conveys this parabolically in Mt 22:1-7. The invitation to submit to the king’s will and come to the banquet is not considered optional. Granted, the king may not drag you to the banquet, but he may very well kill you if you resist his royal summons. Submission to the king’s will by dressing appropriately is not required to save your life in the parable. The only submission necessary to save your life is that you simply come. This would appear to be a reasonable picture of saving faith. God desires full submission and appropriate dress in morally white garments, but the only response necessary to save your life from the fire is that you simply come to saving faith.

Lukan Parallel

The king in the Matthean parable kills those who refuse to come. Likewise, in Lk 19:27 Jesus pictures Himself as a king giving the execution order: “But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.” How much must you want the Lord to reign over you in order to be saved from the death penalty? Enough to serve Him? No. Jesus makes that clear in this Lukan parable as well. The servant in this parable who does not serve his master only submits to his master’s will in one area—he freely receives the mina from his master. The reception of the mina, not the mina itself, represents the transaction that happens in regeneration. The mina itself, on the other hand, represents the corresponding opportunities to serve as a result of having become regenerate. The only submission one must make to be so entrusted and to be a servant is to accept the free offer. One does not have to serve to be a servant in this parable. The only submission we see in this parable by this servant is his receiving the mina. In view of the above texts concerning the obedience of the faith, this would be a picture of someone who submits to the Lordship of Christ by believing in Him for regeneration, but who refuses to do anything by way of service in his actions.

Automatic Lordship

When one believes in Christ for eternal life, he not only becomes regenerate, he automatically becomes entrusted; he becomes a servant whether or not he serves and whether or not he is aware that he has become an entrusted servant. Whether he wants to be a servant or is aware of the transaction makes no difference as to the reality that he has in fact become a servant. The servant in the parable did not want to serve, but he was nonetheless regarded as a servant. He is a picture of someone who has submitted to the Lordship of Christ in one area and one area only; he has obeyed Christ's command to believe in Him for eternal life. Whether or not new converts (such as the woman at the well) are fully aware of the ramifications of their trust in Christ, the fact remains that they are now entrusted by Christ and are accountable as His servants. Christ has become their Lord. He has entrusted them with a tremendous opportunity and will hold them accountable. The invitation to the lost to receive Christ as their Savior and Lord is thus appropriate. When a person becomes a believer, Christ automatically becomes his Lord.

Importance

To be sure, in today's theological climate, we in FG will have to carefully explain that this does not mean that one must submit one's life to Christ or make Him Lord of your life in order to receive the free gift of eternal life. Further, it is not necessary that the affirmation of this aspect of the ramifications of Christ's Lordship be made in every evangelistic encounter. So why bother? Why present an invitation that is so susceptible to being misunderstood?

First, it is biblical. Second, it gives opportunity to affirm the subjective nature of Christ's Lordship in conversion. He is not only objectively Lord; He is subjectively Lord. This is true whether the convert is consciously aware of it or not. Third, it refutes the LS notion that we must make Christ our Lord if we receive Him as our Savior. This is blatantly false. The truth is that Christ makes Himself our Lord when we trust Christ as our Savior. We do not make Him Lord; He makes Himself our Lord by entrusting us as His servants. We are His servants even if we do not serve because we have submitted to His reign over us by receiving the capacity from Him to serve Him. Fourth, it shows that today's so-called Lordship Salvation is not biblical Lordship Salvation. And this latter point needs to be stressed.

Phony Lordship Salvationists

Those in the Christian community who teach that receiving the free gift of eternal life requires that you submit your life to the Lordship of Christ are popularly, but improperly, known as Lordship Salvationists. They label, and libel, those in the Free Grace movement as being *No-Lordship Salvationists* (NLS). In reality, these *Popular Lordship Salvationists* are *Pseudo Lordship Salvationists*. Those in the FG movement are actually the biblical Lordship Salvationists. Hence, *Grace Lordship Salvationists* are the *Genuine Lordship Salvationists* (GLS).

Today's LS refuses to submit to the Lordship of Christ in Mt 7:20-23. They submit their performance to Christ without having ever submitted themselves to His will concerning eternal life. Jesus asks a rhetorical question, "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Lk 6:46) Why should we call today's Lordship Salvationists *Lordship Salvationists* when they refuse do what Christ says is necessary to receive eternal life? Today's *Popular Lordship Salvationists* are better called *Pseudo Lordship Salvationists* or *Phony Lordship Salvationists* (PLS).

Paul is concerned about labels: "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the **false circumcision**; for we are the **true circumcision**, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:2-3). The legalists of Paul's day advocated circumcision. Paul did not hesitate to expose their counterfeit claim. Why should we? Paul turned the tables on them by showing that those who compose the true circumcision are those who glory in Christ rather than their fleshly performance. Why don't we follow his example with modern day legalists?

Jesus certainly does not soften His words on this matter. He blisters these Jewish legalists as *those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie* (Rev 3:9). If this is how He feels about the

legalists of the past, why assume He feels any differently about the legalists of today? Today's legalists claim to be Lordship Salvationists, but they are not. They lie in labeling themselves as Lordship Salvationists. They lie in libeling their opponents as No-Lordship Salvationists. They blaspheme the puny, little FG movement. Will Jesus not also respond to His GLS followers today just as He did then: "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan" (Rev 2:9).

I used to be a PLS, a *Phony Lordship Salvationist*. Like the legalists of Paul's day, I thought I was doing the right thing in asserting that a person had to follow Christ in terms of performance to make it to heaven. And I was trying to do just that to make sure I would make it myself. After exposure to the FG movement, I finally come to realize I was a phony. I was not submitting to the Lordship of Christ. In trusting in my performance, I was failing to submit to the Lordship of Christ. I was trying to make Him my Lord when I should have simply allowed Him to make Himself my Lord. Since I came to that realization, I have vehemently rejected the title *Lordship Salvationist*.

But upon further reflection, I have come to further recognize that in embracing FG theology, I have in actuality become a *Genuine Lordship Salvationist*. I now accept the fact that the only submission to the Lordship of Christ that soteriologically brings salvation is the simple obedience of faith. Such obedience automatically results in Him becoming my Lord. He is my soteric Lord. He has bought me, sealed me, and entrusted me. I might not serve Him. I might not even be aware of the transaction. But my lack of service or awareness does not change the objective fact that He is my subjective Lord. I have submitted to His will in receiving eternal life as a free gift and thereby become His entrusted servant via faith, and He has become my Lord in that He has entrusted me with a stewardship via regeneration. It is time that we call ourselves the *Genuine Lordship Salvationists* and refer to the Satanic counterfeits as *Phony Lordship Salvationists*.

I am a Lordship Salvationist. They are not. They call Christ their Lord but refuse to submit to His will to trust in Christ alone for eternal life. They prefer to trust in their own performance. They do not want the Lord to reign over them. To do so would mean that they would have to do what Christ says is necessary for eternal life and admit that it is not conditioned on their performance. They refuse to do this. They will die as a result. The first and foremost thing that is necessary to become a Lordship Salvationist in the context of Lk 19:27 is to submit to the Lord's will by simply accepting the mina from His hand. If you do that, then you cannot deny that you have submitted to His Lordship over you at least to that extent. If you want the Lord to reign over you to the simple extent that you are willing to submit to His will by freely receiving eternal life from Him, then you have met the requirement of Lk 19:27.

Conversely, if you simply believe in Christ for eternal life, then you have passively accepted His reign over you even if you did not recognize it as such. You have submitted to the Lordship of Christ to the degree necessary for Him to become your Savior and Lord. Just as one can sign a contract without reading all the fine print, and thereby unknowingly acquiesce to the terms of that agreement, one can trust in Christ for eternal life and experience a transformation and transition without reading the entire Bible and without being aware of all that is taking place in receiving eternal life. You experience a transportation into a new Master-servant, Father-son, and Brother-brother relation in which you become Christ's servant and possession, even apart from your conscious realization.

Therefore, the PLS insistence that you must accept Christ as your Lord and Savior is suspect in that it is frequently done with the unbiblical explanation that this means that you must make Christ Lord of your life. This is false. You no more make Him your Lord than you make Him your Savior. You do not make Him save you do you? Of course not! In the same manner, He makes Himself Lord of your life by right of purchase, entrustment, and headship. As His purchased possession you are under His protection. See [Guaranteed Security](#). However, as His possession you are under moral obligation to glorify Him by the way you live (1Cor 6:19-20). Otherwise, you will not come into possession of His kingdom. You will merely be there as a humiliated servant rather than an exalted ruler. Moreover, the PLS insistence does an injustice to the fact that conscious realization of one's subjection is not a biblical necessitation.

I am a Lordship Salvationist because I have submitted myself to the Lordship of Christ by acknowledging that I cannot save myself by submitting to the Lordship of Christ. Contradiction? No. It is irony since the words are used differently. We first and foremost submit ourselves to the Lordship of Christ in an act of faith by admitting that we are not saved by acts of faith. It is not the length of our faith or the expressions of our faith that save us. The obedience of faith that soteriologically saves us is faith alone in Christ alone.

Enemies of Mine

The Lord's servants in the parable are those who receive the mina whether they serve Him with them or not. Some of the Lord's servants will accept the life of the Spirit without walking in the Spirit or producing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-25). They will hide their talent in the ground rather than invest it in the Spirit (Mt 25:25-27). Now to be sure, licentious believers are enemies of God (Jam 4:4). But this Lukan twin to the Matthean parable of the talents is not describing the believer who hides his mina as an enemy of the Lord.

In the parabolic literature of the NT, the master/servant relationship never uses the figure of the slave to refer to the unsaved. The parabolic slave always refers symbolically to the elect—whether angelic or human. If a parable deals with the unsaved, it conveys their fate through means of some other imagery than that of slaves; in this case, it does so through the imagery of enemies. Identification of these parabolic enemies does not help the PLS position. It destroys it. It was the legalists of Jesus' day who hated Him. Jesus was a friend of sinners but an enemy of the legalists. These parabolic enemies of Christ are the legalists who violently respond to the King and His messengers.

It will be objected that the legalists of today love Jesus. Do they? Do they love the Lord of the Gospels or is it the Lord of Legalism whom they love? The Lord of the Gospels does indeed say, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (Jn 14:15). But what does this entail? Is it that we first and foremost "love one another" (Jn 15:12)? No. It is that we first become a member of the *one another*. You cannot serve the Lord with your talent or mina until you are first given the talent or mina. Those who are in the flesh are powerless to please God (Rom 8:8). The fundamental submission upon which we build our subsequent obedience is the admission that we cannot save ourselves by our fleshly performance.

PLS want the Lord of Legalism to reign over them, not the Lord of Grace. The Lord-of-Grace theology is rejected by them. When the Lord of Grace sends out His servants with invitations to come, they vehemently respond that such messengers are *nonlordship* or *no-lordship* Salvationists. In rejecting the message of grace, they have rejected the Lordship of the Lord of Grace. They are not Lordship Salvationists since they have rejected the Lord's command pertaining to salvation. They are Legalistic Salvationists.

¹ Steven W. Waterhouse, *What Must I do to be Saved?*, 28.

² After a good message at the church we had been recently attending, the pastor gave an invitation to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord. My wife, Dianne, realizing I would be sensitive to that invitation and wanting to continue attending this church since our children have friends in this church, sought to sooth my irritation by justifying the pastor's invitation. Her response was that until we become believers, Christ is not our Lord. But when we become believers, Christ becomes our Lord. I told her that her point was valid.

The pastor had said nothing about making Christ Lord of your life. So I held my tongue. The reason I conceded her point as valid is because I immediately put two and two together. In FG theology Christ is everyone's Lord in the objective sense. He is their Lord whether they submit to His authority or not. However, I had just been reading Waterhouse's statements yet again that week and ignoring it as a truism: of course you cannot be saved if you totally rebel against Christ's Lordship since He commands you to believe in Him for eternal life. So if you believe in Him, you have submitted to His Lordship to the degree and in the manner necessary to obtain eternal life. You have obeyed God's decree to a sufficient degree. So what?

It wasn't until the Lord used my wife's comment in conjunction with the timing of the pastor's invitation and my rereading Waterhouse's comments in another publication that it hit me. This means that Christ is the believer's Lord in the subjective sense, even if the believer does not subject his life to His Lordship. Christ commands us to believe. If we believe, we are doing what Christ commands. Therefore, we must submit to the Lordship of Christ in order to become a believer since believing is submission to His command. After all those years of being a PLS, I had

become a GLS without realizing it. Up until my wife's comments, like some of my FG friends, I would have said that FG theology does not require subjective submission to the Lordship of Christ. Now, I believe it does. It is just that in our shellshock reaction to LS we weren't in any condition to see it.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Idem, *Not by Bread Alone*, 163-164.

⁵ Bing, *Lordship Salvation*, 22.

⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁹ Donald H. Bunge, *What Happened to the Word "Believe"?* (Omaha, NE: self published), 1985.

¹⁰ Although *obedience (hupakoe) to the faith* need not refer to initial faith exclusively in Rom 1:5 and 16:26, certainly it does so inclusively. This may also be true of *hupakouo* in Acts 6:7. In any event, *hupakouo* probably refers exclusively to soteric faith in Rom 6:17 and certainly does so in 10:16. Even a LS Calvinist like MacDonald (pp. 56-57) admits:

We must understand that the gospel is a message to be obeyed, and you obey it by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ....That is what Paul elsewhere speaks of as obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). And Luke speaks of a great many priests who were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). Their salvation experience was a single event, not a process."

Whether or not MacDonald is right in confirming the exclusive reference to soteric faith in these passages is open to debate. Lopez is probably correct that the Pauline *inclusio* is inclusive rather than exclusive in Rom 1:5 and 16:26 (*Romans*, 33-34). However, my argument does not require exclusivism in these passages, only inclusivism. But Paul's use of *hupakouo* in a strictly soteric manner in Rom 10:16 should be acknowledged because it is part of his stair steps in Rom 10:14-15 in which the plank for faith in these stair steps is to be identified with the faith in Rom 10:10 for soteriological justification. Consequently, 10:16 is referring to the soteriological faith of 10:10 via the stair steps.

¹¹ Ibid., 26-27.