

尽管“主权救恩”（Lordship Salvation）有许多突出的特点，但我想讨论的是它对福音的理解以及非信徒对福音的反应。

什么是“主权救恩”学说？

简而言之，主权救恩（Lordship Salvation）教导非信徒必须顺服于主耶稣。他们呼吁罪人服于基督的权威。“降服”（surrender，在中文界常说：交托）这个词是打开“主权救恩”本质的一把钥匙。他们经常包括对门徒的呼唤，即“福音”。

一个流行的“主权救恩”网站这样写道：

耶稣所宣扬的福音是呼召人做门徒（call to discipleship），是在顺服中跟随他的呼召，而不仅仅是要人作个决定或做个祷告……圣经告诉我们，耶稣是万有之主，他所要求的信心包括无条件的降服（unconditional surrender）……降服于耶稣的主宰地位不是圣经中救赎条款的附录；降服的呼召是整个圣经的福音邀请的核心。

当然，大多数支持“主权救恩”的人都有令人钦佩的愿望和动机。他们正确地看到了暂时性信心的问题，并正确地批判了它。他们注意到并警告那些属肉体的、腐败的、名义上的基督徒的泥沼。文化基督徒数量众多，因此他们察觉到受骗的“基督徒”需要真正相信耶稣。他们和约翰·班扬一样，在《天路历程》中警告说：“然后我看到有一条通往地狱的路，甚至从天堂的门口连接过去！”“主权救恩”的教师准确地告诫人们不要受《哥林多前书》6:9-10里提到的欺骗人的谎言。我赞赏“主权救恩”希望虚假归信者真正归信，并唤醒罪人意识到自己所处的危险。我赞赏他们对不能救人的虚假信心（魔鬼的信心——雅各书2:19）的关注。我同意他们呼吁基督徒过圣洁和忠心的生活。我也赞扬他们，因为他们确实教导了唯独恩典（sola gratia），悔改是上帝恩典的礼物，耶稣的位格和工作，圣洁生活的需要等等。

什么是律法/福音的区分？

被约翰·加尔文和马丁·路德称为“两句话”（two Words）的律法/福音的区分，被描述为圣经的“总和与实质”。赫尔曼·巴文克（Herman Bavinck）把律法和福音描述为“上帝圣言的两个组成部分”，西奥多·贝扎（Theodore Beza）宣称所有的圣经都可以“分为两个主要部分：一个叫律法，另一个叫福音。因为所有其他的内容都可以归入这两个标题中的一个或另一个。”

律法反映了上帝的圣洁和公义的本质，向我们展示了上帝的要求和旨意。律法揭示了罪。律法呼喊：“要如此行！”而福音宣告了三一上帝的恩典和在基督耶稣里的白白的救赎。福音安慰人们，说：“已经做成了！”当律法和福音被混淆或混杂在一起时，意味着“好消息”的福音把耶稣变成了一个新的摩西，尽管是一个看起来不那么可怕的摩西。严格意义上的福音不是一种劝诫（exhortation），而是一种承诺（promise）。它是一个宣告（declaration），而不是一个“要做之事”的清单，然而，律法和福音的区别很容易被掩盖了。贝扎正确地提醒学生，他写道：“对律法和福音之间的这种区别的无知，是败坏和仍然败坏基督教的主要根源之一。”我相信“主权救恩”会经常将律法和福音混合在一起。

在加拉太书3:10-14，受默示的保罗同时用笔写下了律法（去做）和福音（已经做成）。看看你是否能找到它们以及两者的区别。

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以行律法为本的，都是被咒诅的，因为经上记着：“凡不常照律法书上所记一切之事去行的，就被咒诅。”没有一个人靠着律法在神面前称义，这是明显的，因为经上说：“义人必因信得生。”律法原不本乎信，只说：“行这些事的，就必因此活着。” 基督既为我们受了咒诅，就赎出我们脱离律法的咒诅，因为经上记着：“凡挂在木头上都是被咒诅的。” 这便叫亚伯拉罕的福，因基督耶稣可以临到外邦人，使我们因信得着所应许的圣灵。

加拉太书3:10-14

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律法说：去如此做！（“凡不遵守律法书上一切所写的，都要受咒诅”）

福音说：已经做成了！（“基督为我们成为咒诅，把我们从律法的咒诅中赎出来”）

律法/福音区分的益处

为了帮助读者理解其中的差异和细微差别，请允许我列出针对“主权救恩”，区分律法和福音的四个益处。这些益处将强调正确区分律法和福音的关键性。

益处之一：向不信的人传讲福音

应该告诉不信的人怎样做，才能正确地回应耶稣的代替罪人所过的完美一生、代赎性死亡、实际埋葬和身体复活的好消息？

选项1：降服、屈服、珍惜、渴望、服从和/或委身（surrender, yield, treasure, desire, submit and/or commit）。

选项2：相信、信靠、接受、接受和/或安息（believe, trust, receive, accept and/or rest）。

这两者有什么区别吗？

选项1将强调和重点放在听福音的人自己身上。回答的重点是罪人必须做什么。选项1面对的问题是，人站立在三一圣洁的上帝面前的唯一理由是完美的理由。就像一个微小的、有缺陷的“O型环”能将航天飞机推入到绝境，同样，人一个微小的罪也足以使他受到诅咒。因此，如果“降服”（surrender）是对耶稣基督福音的正确回应，那么这种降服必须是完美的。如果“屈服”是答案，这种屈服必须是完整的。如果“珍惜”是献给神的，最好是准确的。如果“渴望”使主喜悦，渴望最好是永久的。如果“顺服”正确地描述了一个不信的人对复活的救主的反应，那么这种顺服必须是毫无瑕疵的。“承诺”必须有完美的动机和意图。选项1中的每一个动词最终都将注意力指向了听到福音的人。他们必须做什么？焦点应该在其他地方吗？

选项2的回答将所有重点指向目标——耶稣基督本身。相信、信靠、接受和休息都是以上帝为中心。强调的是信心的对象，而不是信心本身（虽然不信的人必须相信，但他的信心本身不是救主，耶稣才是）。与选项1以人为本的强调不同；选项2呼吁不信的人远离自我，投靠基督。信心将注意力集中在主耶稣基督身上，他完美地、完全地、准确地、永久地遵守了律法，并通过为我们遵守律法而获得了义（耶稣不需要为自己遵守律法，因为他不论过去现在，本身就是义的）。然后，耶稣作为大祭司和积极物，通过承担他新娘的罪，把她赎回。

因此，信心可以是而且的确是不完美的，因为它不是人得救的基础。如果信靠的是正确的人，只要有一点信心就足够了。如果信靠的是无罪的救主，哪怕被罪污染的信心也就足够了。如果信靠的是全能的耶稣，哪怕脆弱的信靠也可以拯救。任何信徒得救的理由是耶稣基督完全的义，而不是他们自己的信心或安息。

有人问：“‘相信’不是一个人必须遵行的命令吗？”是的，信心是救恩的非功德性的工具（non-meritorious instrument），但它不是救恩的基础（ground）。托马斯·波士顿（Thomas Boston）很清楚地说：“信心并不能使你有资格来到基督面前，信心就是来到基督面前的动作。”一些神学家称“相信”是福音的命令（gospel imperative）。人相信的对象是主耶稣。是的，信心和信靠与福音和主所做的恩典相关的，但信心和信靠的动作本身不是救主。信心本身没有过完美的一生，死在十字架上，信心本身也没有从死里复活。

虽然“主权救恩”包含许多不同细微差别，但在其核心，它是以选项1为导向的。从历史上看，选项1是阿民念主义（Arminian）。“主权救恩”号召非信徒去相信，但他们也要求非信徒做更多的事（即降服、委身等）。改教家们认为信心是信任性的（fiducial信赖另一个人），而阿民念派则声称信仰是意志性的volitional（对某人的委身和降服）。巴刻（J.I. Packer）将信任性的信心描述为仰望主所做的事情，而描述意志性的信心是渴望“按照基督所赐的新律法生活。”

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在第一部分中，我们考查了“主权救恩”的定义和宗教改革中律法与福音的区分。如果你像“主权救恩”的人经常做的那样，阅读《马太福音》19:16-30中的“年轻财主”这段经文，你会看到耶稣呼吁人们降服、顺服和做门徒。他们教导说，这个财主应该听从耶稣的呼召，全然降服。问题是，耶稣给这财主的是福音还是律法？

如果你把它解读为律法（神学家称之为“律法的第一重功用”，因为它暴露了不信的人身上的罪），那么你清楚地看到耶稣正在使用律法揭露这个财主的内心。这个律法要求、谴责，而且是不打折扣的。耶稣所讲的律法应该使这个人说：“我不能遵守这样的律法。我是有罪的。我被定罪了。你对我的精确评估是正确的。在上帝那里能找到任何希望或怜悯吗？在你身上，耶稣？请发发慈悲。怜悯我这个罪人吧！”可悲的是，这段经文中没有显示出这位财主有任何悔恨、悔改，也没有显示出这财主认为自己需要寻求一位拯救他的主。

读一读《马太福音》19:16-17，问问自己，“耶稣是给这个人讲的是律法，还是福音的好消息？”

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有一个人走到他跟前，说：“老师，我必须做什么善事才能得永生？”他说：“你为什么问我什么是善呢？只有一位是善的。你若要得生命，就当遵守诫命。“（直译）

马太福音19:16-17

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耶稣向这个人传了福音吗？福音是好消息——它宣告了上帝在基督里所做的一切。福音宣讲着关于耶稣的代替性的一生和代赎性的死已完成的事实。它宣布耶稣已经战胜了罪恶、死亡和撒旦。耶稣并没有向年轻的财主传讲好消息。基督给他的是律法（“遵守诫命”）。

上帝在福音中发出的一个邀请（offer）。他并不要求。上帝的福音是白白赐下的（give freely）。不是说如果罪人首先顺从、委身、渴望、珍惜或屈服，才赐下福音。信徒在回应上帝的拯救工作时，会在圣洁生活的范畴内，开始顺从和降服，但对福音的回应不是“相信并遵守律法”。福音不是西奈山。福音中没有威胁，没有对罪人的惩罚，没有末日的警告，没有关于轻视上帝工作的描述。相反，福音揭示了赦罪、喜乐、安慰和恩典的保证。我们应该警告罪人关于地狱和罪的代价吗？是的，但这不是福音，而是律法。“完美地做这件事，否则将永远灭亡”，这不是好消息。这是可怕的消息。它是令人战兢的消息。虽然这是真的，但它不是福音。

准确地说：福音本身与我们需要福音的原因是两件事。罪人需要耶稣基督的福音，原因是他们是罪人。此外，福音本身与接受福音的工具也是两件事。我们的信心不是福音，相反，它是接受基督所做的一切的非功德性工具（non-meritorious means）。我们的归信和基督徒圣洁生活都不是福音，但它们是福音所结的果子和证据。当人们拒绝福音时，这种拒绝会带来一些后果，如永恒的地狱和上帝的愤怒，但这些东西严格来说不是福音的一部分。福音是好消息！它是三一上帝所成就的事！非受生的父派遣受生而非被造的子来白白地、满有恩慈地拯救罪人。圣灵不仅在地上协助/添加力量给道成肉身的耶稣，而且还奇妙地将基督工作的益处（包括他对律法的公义遵守和为我们的罪所献上的代赎性死亡）应用到我们的身上。这的确是个好消息。

“主权救恩”经常强调罪人的顺服和无条件的降服。他们为了避免单纯头脑上的同意，他们告诉非信徒必须要**做一些事情**而不仅仅是相信。这就是**律法**。相反，他们应该叫不信者安息在爱罪人的基督身上和他所完成的工作中。许多“主权救恩”的倡导者认为《马太福音》第19章是耶稣告诉那个人的是福音。可是耶稣给出的是律法，而且只是律法。

“主权救恩”的反面不一定是“廉价恩典”神学或”轻信主义”（easy believism）。它真正的反面是律法/福音的区分。对虚假的归信者的补救措施是耶稣基督的福音。解决属肉体生活的方法不是更多的律法或在福音中加入律法。呼唤罪人”降服“并不是真正的解决办法。“主权救恩”的倡导者不愿意提供白白的福音，是因为人们可能会利用这种白白的恩典，随后犯罪，以使“恩典更显多”（罗马书6:1）。保罗一点都不勉强。

一个不信的人从来不需要服从/降服/遵守律法，或者珍惜或渴望上帝以获得拯救。对耶稣基督的信心不包含罪人的个人服从。信心远离自我，投靠在另一个人即主耶稣的完美顺服中。一个人得救后，显然会有顺服和降服，但这既不是无条件的，也不是完全的。

请注意《威斯敏斯特大要理问答》如何谨慎地引导信心和信心的果实，善行：

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问73：信心如何使罪人在神面前得称为义？

答：（一）信心使罪人在神面前得称为义，并不是靠着那些随信心而来的恩惠、或靠着信心所结的善行之果，也不是把信心的恩惠、信心的行为归给罪人，好使他得称为义；

（二）信心使罪人在神面前得称为义，只是因为信心是器皿，借此罪人可以接受并支取基督和祂的义。

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唯独信心是唯独在耶稣基督的信心。包括了顺服、放手、让步和委身，就不是在基督里安歇的信心。得救信心的组成是知识、同意和信靠，而不是知识、同意和顺服或降服。顺服、忠信和降服当然会随着称义和新生而来，但它们不是基础，也不是工具。耶稣是根基，唯独信心是工具。范畴很重要。

益处之二一一保持范畴区分

“主权救恩”经常混淆称义和成圣，问一个自称是信徒的人：“你有没有在你生活的每个方面都降服于耶稣的主权？”（以律法为重点）。“你过着足够圣洁的生活吗？”（以律法为中心）。相反，应该首先问信徒：“你相信复活的救主吗？”（以福音为中心）。“你是否安歇在上帝之子已完成的完美工作中？（以福音为中心）。因信成圣将留待在另一篇文章。我并不是说圣洁的生活是无关紧要的、不必要的、或可有可无的。我是说敬虔不是任何人得救的基础。

卡斯帕·奥列维努斯（Caspar Olevianus）写道：“律法不是白白应许，而是以你完全遵守为条件……福音白白应许罪和生命的赦免，不是因为我们遵守律法，而是因着神的儿子的缘故，藉着信。”福音不是有条件的。一个人在相信之前没有什么必须做的。“唯独信心”就是“只藉着信”。一个人必须停止犯罪才能来到基督面前吗？不。一个人必须将自己的生命交给耶稣才能相信吗？不。降服和相信一样吗？不，上帝会称不敬虔的人为义吗？是的。没有什么是人能做或必须做的，来相信复活的救主。换句话说，他们在相信之前没有必须遵守的律法（屈服、顺服、守诺、降服等）。单单安歇在基督里，不是在耶稣加上你的顺服里。单单相信救主，而不是祂再加上顺服或离弃罪。如果离弃罪是来到基督面前的先决条件，那么离弃的比例一定是百分之百。当一个人被父吸引并相信时，肯定会离弃罪，但那是成圣/善行的范畴，而不是称义。我们必须将降服、委身、让步、顺服和渴望归入成圣范畴。

“主权救恩”倾向于使圣洁的生活成为称义的考验。这也混淆了范畴。虽然在信徒寻求治死罪（并为义而活）的过程中，汗水和辛劳是必要的，但辛勤工作并不属于只唯独藉信称义的范畴。信徒的行为不是耶稣。正如托马斯·威尔科克斯（Thomas Wilcox）所说，许多人错误地把基督徒的圣洁生活当作“拯救他们的基督”。在三一上帝面前，圣洁的生活（无论它多么伟大，多么应该被强调）永远不是（现在或最终）你的义。

测试用例——罗马书2:13

罗马书2:13说：“原来在神面前，不是听律法的为义，乃是行律法的称义”。“主权救恩”支持者通常利用这段经文作为圣洁生活的动力，这样基督徒就会确定他们的信仰告白是否有效，并用好行为来证明它是足够的。“你在守律法吗？” “确保你继续遵守律法？”“遵守。” “你是一位虚假的基督徒吗？”再次强调，适当的分类是必不可少的。

罗马书2:13的律法/福音的区分解决方案是什么？首先，罗马书1-3a的大背景是律法。保罗正在系统地拆解每个人，无论他们是不义的（第1章）还是在他们自己眼中的道德上是“义”的（第2-3章）。保罗坚持这些章节的读者同意他们没有主所要求的义（完全的义）。第二，直接的上下文从第6节开始说，“祂必照各人的行为报应各人。”上帝有什么要求？完美。你的生活完美吗？一直都是完美的吗？保罗希望读者放弃对他/她自己的所有希望，以便他/她寻求上帝自己提供的解脱。第三，正常阅读文本就足够了。如果人能完全顺服，神为什么要定他们的罪呢？我们知道亚当的罪影响了每个人，所以罗马书2:13这只是假设，但重点仍然存在：完完全全地顺服，否则你注定要失败。保罗最终会促使他们找到由他者——上帝之子提供的公义（罗3:21）。

“主权救恩”出于强调圣洁生活的愿望，将罗马书2:13（旨在驱使不信者承认他需要完全公义的律法）变成了基督徒的律法。这是一个范畴错误。这段经文不是要基督徒遵守的。你知道改革宗信仰告白和教会信条极大地帮助保持类别区分吗？忽视信条和信经会对教会产生不利影响，这就是一个很典型的例子。教会中属肉体的宣信者并不是一个新问题。关于虚假信心的神学辩论已经发生。我们可以从过去学习。这不是一场新的战斗。但我们必须注意不要把罗马书2这样的经文纳入成圣或圣洁的生活范畴。大多数信仰告白都以这种方式将与主题相关的章节分开：

* 称义
* 成圣
* 好行为

只看上面的分类，就可以解决很多问题。范畴将事物保留在其中，也将事物排除在外。不要混合范畴。不要混淆范畴。观察范畴的逻辑发展。称义导致上帝成圣的工作，产生好行为。

益处之三——了解上帝律法的不同功用

律法的第三功用（律法作为信徒的指南）与律法的第一次功用（定罪不信者的镜子）大不相同。虽然上帝的律法没有改变，但在上帝拯救我们之后，我们与律法赐予者的关系就不同了。作为不信者，我们面对的是以创造者和审判者的身份的上帝。作为信徒，我们面对的是为父的上帝。律法现在不再是谴责基督徒，而是引导和指导信徒的生活。根据我的经验，大多数“主权救恩”的教师要么不相信律法的不同功用，要么即使他们相信，也没有准确地教授这些差异。

真的还是假的？上帝接受信徒的软弱和受罪污染的行为，因为祂接受了他的儿女。答案是“真的”，这与律法和“主权救恩”的使用直接相关。作为审判者的上帝永远不会接受任何被罪污染的行为，但作为父亲的上帝爱祂的儿女，因此接受他们不完美的工作。如果电视节目《厨艺大师》(Master chef)的大厨戈登·拉姆齐(Gordon Ramsey)评判一个八岁孩子做的蛋糕，他可能会因为这个孩子做的蛋糕太差而骂他。但如果那个八岁的孩子是他的女儿，她为他的生日烤了蛋糕，他会微笑着吃掉最后一点面包屑。

世上的父亲经常管教不听话的孩子，但他们不会把有罪的孩子踢出家门。世上的父亲怜悯、供养和保护他们的孩子。如果不小心，“主权救恩”的教师会混淆上帝的诫命，并将上帝的律法作为第一次功用而不是第三功用传给基督徒。基督徒不愿因天父所做的一切和祂所是的一切而荣耀祂，而是因不顺服上帝而害怕，怕的是他们认为上帝可能会不收养他们。信徒们顺服上帝不是出于对父爱的感恩，而是因为担心自己在上帝面前的地位不保而顺服。当律法的第一个和第三个功用混合在一起时，基督徒会怀疑他们是否表现出缺乏真正的顺服，当他们与顺服作斗争挣扎时，他们会质疑自己的救恩。当人们理解了他们与立法者有不同的关系时，这些疑虑就会被重新定位。

此外，正确教导律法的第三功用可以让牧师和圣经教师强调基督徒的顺服，同时避免无法纪状态或反律法主义。“主权救恩”和改革宗都强调圣洁的生活。这方面没有争议。牧师宣讲第三功用（指导或规范）听起来像是在鼓励会众顺服。激励人的不是恐惧、害怕或厄运，而是三一上帝的爱。上帝以永恒的爱来爱祂的儿女。上帝如此爱基督徒，以至于祂用律法引导他们，为了他们的益处和祂的荣耀。

当我在“主权救恩”阵营时，我经常看到会众里到处都是假归正者，我认为我的工作是铲除他们。使用“主权救恩”模型，我花了太多时间挑战假宣信者的信仰，却没有足够的时间鼓励软弱的基督徒。我没有像耶稣那样，以更多的空间来容纳压伤的芦苇和将残的灯火。

传扬耶稣基督的美德不是牧师的特权吗？信徒们在讲道时被定罪，在离开主日礼拜时难道不应该受到鼓励，被建造起来，专注于上帝对他们的恩典？希伯来书本质上是一篇讲道。这封书信一章一章地将听众的注意力引向大祭司耶稣基督。希伯来书12:2抓住了作者目标的本质，说：“仰望为我们信心创始成终的耶稣。他因那摆在前面的喜乐，就轻看羞辱，忍受了十字架的苦难，便坐在神宝座的右边。”是的，耶稣确实为我们降服和顺服。这是个好消息。由于耶稣的生平和作为，我们现在有了一位中保，我们通过祂接受上帝的律法。现在顺服它是一种快乐，因为即使我们的不顺服也被赦免了。

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在第2部分中，我们考查了年轻财主的案例。在这最后一部分中，让我们思想这场辩论中最重要的段落之一：罗马书2:13。

益处之四——给信徒以确据

“主权救恩”经常质疑一个人的信仰告白。坦率地说，它破坏了确据。如何？在“主权救恩”模型中，如果自称是基督徒的人表现出缺乏真正的顺服，并且挣扎于顺服，怎么办？在有人质疑他/她自己的救恩之前，需要多少承诺？在自称是基督徒的人怀疑他们的得救之前，允许多少不顺服？

在新冠引起的肺炎剧烈发作期间，我的健康状况没有改善。医生说了三个难以忘记的词：“急性呼吸衰竭”。虽然从未戴上呼吸机，但我很多天确实需要以每分钟60升的速度输送“高流量”氧气。在“新冠隔离”的十六天最黑暗的时期，我的思绪徘徊在我可能即将到来的死亡以及我最后一口气之后会发生什么。我知道我是一个罪人，而造物主是圣洁公义的。我明白必须以一种或另一种方式（我或代替者）为我的罪付出代价。我那病中缺氧的头脑所能想到的一切，我在精神上遍历了在审判日幸存下来的所有可能选择：民事善行、宗教行为、诚心敬拜等等——但我知道这些选择毫无价值。上帝要求完美。上帝要求完美。

问题轰炸着我疲惫的头脑。我的思想在用一些我似乎没有问过的问题审问我。我觉得审判已经开始了。

* 我向主降服足够吗？
* 我是否足够顺服上帝？
* 我向上帝屈服足够吗？
* 如果我被欺哄了怎么办？
* 如果我有错误的信心怎么办？
* 如果…？

我没有答案，只有这样的想法：“永恒真长啊。” “我的罪应该受到惩罚。” “我配得审判。”“现在怎么办？”

最后，一个来自圣经的想法闪过我的脑海：“我唯一的希望是唯独信心。我没有别的办法可以站在主面前。我需要一位代言人和中保。我需要从另一位那里来的完美的义。”我对主说：“主，我知道我被罪玷污了，达不到你的标准，但耶稣说，只要我信靠祂，我就会有永生。我相信你，我相信祂。我相信耶稣确实为我而活，为我的每一项罪而死。我相信耶稣战胜了死亡，并且真正地回来了。我想活着并再次见到我的家人，但我顺服你美好和正确的计划。谢谢。”我睡着了。

像我这样的经历比我们想象的要普遍。许多人提出这些永恒的问题，不仅在他们临终时，而且在他们活着的时候，在他们“心智正常”的时候。永恒是漫长的。地狱是真实的。天堂是神圣的。如果圣洁的生活是人们得救的基础，因此他们的确据取决于正直的生活，那么成熟的使徒保罗会因为他在罗马书7中的陈述而质疑他的信心吗？保罗没有做他愿意做的事，反而他做了他恨恶的事（罗马书7:15）。我们是否应该质疑保罗的信仰告白，因为他写道：“不是我做的，乃是住在我里头的罪做的？”保罗是否在罗马书第7章质疑他自己的救恩？当然不是。

可悲的是，基督徒会犯罪。成熟的基督徒会叛逆。甚至耶稣基督的使徒也亏缺了上帝的荣耀而违背了上帝的旨意。问题不应该是：“因为你仍然得罪圣洁的上帝，你怎么能称自己为基督徒？”倒不如说是：“当你得罪上帝时，你会伤心吗？你渴望取悦祂吗？服从祂吗？”然后基督徒会回答说：“是的，是的，是的！”倘若我要问，“谁把顺服和恨恶犯罪的愿望放在了你的心里？”他们会用“CNN”还是“撒旦”来回应？虽然有些罪在最初得救时立即得到处理，但其他罪的模式却仍挥之不去。我已经信了三十多年，但我仍然在与各种各样的罪作斗争。你有吗？这句流行的格言是真的：“耶稣为基督徒的罪支付了**代价**（penalty），罪的**权势**（power）被征服了，但基督徒心中的罪将一直**存在**（presence），直到得荣为止。”

我们从不想成为罪的辩护者，但我们确实想成为现实主义者。因此，我们相信上帝的成圣工作，因此我们渴望以更快的悔改和更少的悔改时间来回应天父。出于感激，我们想要顺服主耶稣，因为祂是一位如此奇妙的救主。由于这篇文章在海德堡博客上，我必须引用《海德堡教理问答》，看这些问题（和答案）如何处理“主权救恩”模式的。

「

14问：那些归向上帝的人能完全遵守这些诫命吗？

回答：不能。今生即使最圣洁的人，在这种顺服上也不过是微不足道的起步；不过，他们确实认真地定意要开始活出上帝所有的诫命。

115问：既然今生无人能完全遵守十诫，上帝为何仍然命令我们严格地宣讲呢？

回答：第一，好叫我们在一生中越来越认识我们的罪性，从而更渴望地在基督里寻求赦罪和公义；第二，好叫我们持续不断地努力，不住地祈求上帝赐下圣灵的恩典，从而使我们按上帝的形像日趋更新，直到此生之后，最终达至完全。

」

令人遗憾的是，基督徒仍然会犯罪。但基督徒的罪不是由主耶稣基督偿还的吗？是的，他们被赦免了！难怪马丁路德使用拉丁短语说“simul iustus et peccator”（同时是义人**和**罪人）。基督徒被宣布为义，但仍然犯罪，并且会一直犯罪直到得荣。基督徒同时是被称义的，**和**有罪的。

“主权救恩”的支持者经常正确地揭露一种虚假的信心。宗教改革也教导说，单纯的理性信心并不能得救。虚假的信心和理性的信心都不可能产生确据。宗教改革和“主权救恩”之间的区别在于律法/福音的区别。就是说，与其引导人主要看自己的生命，审视自己是否忠信，不如仰望复活的救主，才能有确据。着眼于“完成”而不是“去做”是至关重要的。马丁路德的名言是这样的：“当我仰望自己时，我不知道我如何才能得救，但当我仰望主耶稣时，我不知道我怎么会失落。”

误解律法/福音的区分，包括律法的功用，确据得不到，而是被撤消。我看一个常常在“主权救恩”神学下的人，会常常问这些问题：

* 我得救了吗？
* 我是一个错误的归正者吗？
* 我被欺哄了吗？
* 我足够忠信吗？
* 我够认真恳切吗？
* 我够痛悔吗？
* 我够好吗？
* 我够正义吗？
* 我悔改足够吗？
* 我祷告够多吗？
* 我够圣洁吗？
* 我读圣经够多吗？

我的回答来自一位睿智的清教徒托马斯·威尔科克斯（Thomas Wilcox，1549-1608年），他大胆地说：“你对自己的抱怨太多了。你的罪是否让你更多地定睛基督，少看自己？” “足够”的语言已经够了。虽然我不介意从内心寻找救恩的确据和果实，但我确实介意这种寻找仅止于此！自我审察的目的必须与基督有关，而不是个人的动机、意图、诚意、行为或爱。基督徒，你知道吗？

* 耶稣寻找并彻底拯救了迷失的人。
* 耶稣在地上是足够忠信的。
* 耶稣足够认真。
* 耶稣足够好。
* 耶稣祷告足够多。
* 耶稣已经足够圣洁。
* 耶稣足够公义。
* 耶稣读了足够多的圣经。
* 耶稣传福音足够多。

亲爱的基督徒，你“在基督里”吗？与基督耶稣联合是一个现实（罗马书 6 :1）。仰望耶稣，你的鼓励程度不是直线上升吗？难道祂伟大的救恩没有促使你出于感恩和感激而顺服和降服吗？欢喜的是，主耶稣以永恒的爱爱你，没有什么能使你与祂的爱隔绝（罗马书 8:35）。耶稣是“主”吗？当然。人必须完全顺服祂的主权才能得救吗？绝对不是（唯独信心）。基督徒出于感激，是否应该渴望顺服他们的天父吗？是的！如果一个基督徒的顺服在动摇、软弱和欠缺，我们应该立即叫他们“省察自己”吗？不。我们要质疑他们的救恩吗？不，基督徒也需要福音。耶稣不仅是为了称义，也是为了成圣。耶稣既是为了我们而来，也在我们里面。耶稣为赦免而来，耶稣为执行权能而来。检视耶稣并祂的作为的时间，要比检视你的果子和上帝在你生命中工作的证据的时间要多十倍。

结论

尽管我对许多“主权救恩”支持者的爱依然存在，但我对他们的渴望是转向律法/福音区分的范式。我真的相信，如果“主权救恩”者接受了对律法/福音区分的正确理解，这将使他们的追随者站起来，并称他们（领袖）有福。

https://www.reformedbeginner.net/my-pilgrimage-from-lordship-to-law-gospel/

My Pilgrimage From “Lordship” to Law/Gospel (part 1)

by MIKE ABENDROTH on June 2, 2022

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Though the Lordship Salvation doctrine (hereafter LS) has many distinguishing characteristics, the one I want to address is its view of the gospel and the unbeliever’s response to it.

What Is The “Lordship Salvation” Doctrine?

In brief, LS regularly teaches that unbelievers must submit to Jesus the Lord. They call sinners to yield to Christ’s authority. “Surrender” is a key to unlocking the essence of LS. They often include the call to discipleship, “the gospel.”

One popular LS Internet site states,

The gospel that Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow him in submissive obedience, not just a plea to make a decision or pray a prayer … Scripture teaches that Jesus is Lord of all, and the faith He demands involves unconditional surrender… Surrender to Jesus’ lordship is not an addendum to the biblical terms of salvation; the summons to submission is at the heart of the gospel invitation throughout Scripture. (emphasis added)

Certainly, most proponents of LS have admirable desires and motives. They properly see the problem of a temporary faith and assess it rightly. They notice and call out the morass of carnal, corrupt false professors of nominal Christianity. Cultural “Christians” are legion, and they perceive the need for deceived “Christians” to truly believe Jesus. They, with John Bunyan, in The Pilgrim’s Progress, warn, “Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction!” LS teachers accurately caution people from a 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 deception. I appreciate the LS desire for false converts to truly believe and to awaken sinners to their peril. I applaud their concern over a false, spurious faith that does not save (a demonic faith—James 2:19). I agree with their call for Christians to live holy and faithful lives. I also commend LS teachers because they do teach sola gratia, repentance as a gift of divine grace, the person and work of Jesus, the need for holy living and much more.

What is Law/Gospel?

The Law/Gospel paradigm, which John Calvin and Martin Luther called, “the Two Words,” has been described as the “sum and substance” of the Bible. Herman Bavinck described the Law and the Gospel as “two component parts of the Word of God” and Theodore Beza declared that all the Bible can be “divided into two principal parts: the one is called the Law, the other the Gospel. For all the rest can be gathered under the one or the other of these two headings.”

The Law, reflecting God’s holy and righteous nature, shows us what God requires and wills. The Law reveals sin. The Law shouts, “Do!” The Gospel declares the Triune God’s favor and free salvation in Christ Jesus. The Gospel comforts, saying, “It is done!” When the Law and Gospel are confused or mingled, the Gospel, which means “good news,” turns Jesus into a new Moses, albeit a seemingly less formidable one. The strict Gospel is not an exhortation, it is a promise. It is a declaration, not a “to do” list, yet it is very easy for the difference of Law and Gospel to be eclipsed. Beza rightly alerts Bible students, writing, “Ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the principal sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt Christianity.” I believe LS often blends Law and Gospel.

In Galatians 3:10–14, the inspired Paul pens both Law (do) and Gospel (done). See if you can find them and the difference between the two:

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (ESV)

The Law: do (“cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the LAW”).

The Gospel: done (“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us”).

Advantages of Law/Gospel

To help the reader understand the differences and nuances allow me lay out four advantages of distinguishing between Law and Gospel over against LS . These advantages will highlight the critical nature of rightly distinguishing between Law and Gospel.

ADVANTAGE #1 – PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO UNBELIEVERS

What should unbelievers be told to do, to properly respond to the proclamation of the good news of Jesus’ representative life, substitutionary death, literal burial and bodily resurrection?

Option 1: Surrender, yield, treasure, desire, submit and/or commit.

Option 2: Believe, trust, receive, accept and/or rest.

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

Option 1 places the stress and emphasis on the person hearing the Gospel of what Jesus did. The responses focus on what the sinner must do. The problem with Option 1 is the only ground which one can stand before the thrice holy God is the ground of perfection. Just as a tiny, defective “O ring” catapulted the Space Shuttle into oblivion, so too, a single sin is enough to damn any person. Therefore, if “surrender” is the proper response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the “surrender” must be perfect. If “yielding” is the answer, the yielding is to be entire. If “treasuring” is offered to God, it had better be exact. If “desiring” pleases the Lord, the desire better be perpetual. If “submit” correctly describes an unbeliever’s response to the Risen Savior, the submission must be flawless. “Commit” must be with perfect motives and intentions. Every verb in Option 1 ultimately directs its attention to the person hearing the Gospel. What must they do? Should the focus be elsewhere?

Option 2 contains responses which direct all the emphasis toward the Object, Jesus Christ Himself. Believe, trust, receive, accept and rest are all God focused. The stress is upon the object of one’s faith, not even the faith itself (while the unbeliever must believe, his or her faith is not the savior, rather Jesus is the Savior). Unlike Option 1’s man centered emphasis; Option 2 calls the unbeliever to look away from self and trust Christ. Faith directs its attention to the Lord Jesus Christ who perfectly, entirely, exactly, perpetually obeyed and merited righteousness by His wonderful law keeping for us (Jesus had no need to obey the law for Himself because He was, and is, inherently righteous). Jesus then, as both High Priest and sacrifice, redeemed His bride by bearing her sins.

Belief, therefore, can be, and is, less than perfect because it is not the ground of anyone’s salvation. A little faith in the right Person is enough. A sin tainted belief in the Sinless Savior is adequate. A frail trust in the Mighty Jesus saves. The ground of salvation for any believer is the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ, not their trusting or resting.

Some ask, “Is not ‘believe’ a command that a person must do?” Yes, faith is the non-meritorious instrument of salvation but it is not the ground. Thomas Boston is clear saying, “Faith does not qualify you to come to Christ, faith is coming.” Some theologians call “believe” a gospel imperative. The object of the person’s belief is the Lord Jesus. Yes, faith and trust are related to the Gospel and what the Lord has graciously done, but faith and trust are not the saviors. They did not live a perfect live, die on the cross and they were not raised from the dead.

While LS contains many flavors and nuances, at its heart, it is Option 1 oriented. Historically, Option 1 is Arminian. LS calls unbelievers to believe, but they also demand the unbeliever to do more than believe (i.e. surrender, commit, etc.). The Reformers saw faith as fiducial (trusting another), while the Arminians claimed faith was volitional (commitment and surrender to someone). J.I. Packer describes fiducial as looking to what the Lord has done and volitional desiring “to live by the new law which Christ procured.”

https://heidelblog.net/2022/06/my-pilgrimage-from-lordship-to-law-gospel/

My Pilgrimage From “Lordship” to Law/Gospel (part 2): Test Case—The Rich Young Ruler

by MIKE ABENDROTH on June 7, 2022

In part 1 we considered the definition of Lordship Salvation and the Reformation distinction between Law and Gospel. If you read the “rich young ruler” passage in Matthew 19:16-30 as the LS folks frequently do, you will see Jesus calling people to surrender, submission, and discipleship. They teach that the ruler should heed the call of Jesus to totally surrender. Was Jesus giving the man the Gospel or the Law?

If you read it as Law (what theologians call the “first use” because it exposes the sin in unbelievers), then you clearly see Jesus uncovering the man’s heart by using the Law. This Law demands, condemns, and is unbendable. The Law preached by Jesus should lead the man to say, “I cannot keep such a law. I am guilty. I stand condemned. You are right in your precise assessment of me. Is there any hope or mercy to be found in God? In you, Jesus? Please be gracious. Have mercy upon me, the sinner.” Sadly, the text does not show any remorse, repentance, or the man’s perceived need of a seeking and saving Lord.

Look at Matthew 19:16–17 and ask yourself, “Does Jesus give the Law or Good news to the man?”

And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” (ESV)

Did Jesus preach the Gospel to the ruler? No. The Gospel is good news–it proclaims what God in Christ has done. It heralds an accomplished fact concerning the representative life and the substitutionary death of Jesus. It announces that Jesus has triumphed over sin, death, and Satan. Jesus did not preach the good news to the rich young ruler. Christ gave him Law (“keep the commandments”).

God extends an offer in the Gospel. He does not demand. God’s Gospel gives freely. It does not give to the sinner if the sinner first submits, commits, desires, treasures, or yields. The believer, in response to God’s saving work, will, in the category of holy living, begin to submit and surrender, but the response to the Gospel is not “believe and keep the Law.” The Gospel is not Mt. Sinai. The Gospel contains no threats, no punishments upon sinners, no warnings of doom, zero descriptions about thinking lightly of God’s work. Rather, the Gospel reveals forgiveness, joy, comfort, and a gracious assurance. Should we warn sinners about Hell and the wages of sin? Yes, but that is not good news. It is Law. “Do this perfectly or perish eternally” is not good news. It is awful news. It is terrifying news. While true, it is not the Gospel.

To be precise: the Gospel is different from why we need the Gospel. Sinners need the good news of Jesus Christ because they are sinners. Furthermore, the Gospel is not the means of receiving the Gospel. Our believing is not the Gospel, rather, it is the non-meritorious means of receiving all that Christ has done. Our conversion and holy life as Christians are not the Gospel, but they are fruit and evidence of it. When people reject the Gospel, there are consequences to such rejection, such as eternal Hell and God’s wrath, but those things are not strictly speaking part of the Gospel. The Gospel is good news! It is what the Triune God has done! The unbegotten Father sends the begotten, not made, Son to rescue sinners, freely and graciously. The Holy Spirit not only assisted/empowered the incarnate Jesus on earth, but He also wonderfully applies the benefits of Christ’s work (both His righteous Law keeping and substitutionary death for our sins) to our account. That is, indeed, good news.

LS all too often stresses submission and unconditional surrender of the sinner. In their attempt to avoid mere intellectual assent, they want to tell the unbeliever to DO something more than believe. That is Law. Instead, they should call unbelievers to rest in the person and finished work of a God Man who loves sinners. Many LS advocates think Matthew 19 has Jesus telling the man good news. Jesus is giving the Law and the Law alone.

The opposite of LS is not necessarily “Free Grace” theology or “easy believism.” It is Law/Gospel. The remedy for false converts is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The solution to carnal living is not more Law or Law added to the Gospel. Calling sinners to “surrender” is not the solution. Are LS advocates reluctant to offer the free Gospel because people might take advantage of such free grace and subsequently sin that “grace might abound?” (Romans 6:1). Paul was not reluctant at all.

An unbeliever never has to obey/surrender/keep the Law, treasure or desire God in order to be saved. Faith in Jesus Christ contains no personal obedience of the sinner. Faith looks away from self and believes in the perfect obedience of Another, the Lord Jesus. After a person is saved, there will obviously be obedience and surrender, but it will not be unconditional nor total.

Notice how carefully the Westminster Larger Catechism navigates faith and the fruit of faith, works:

Q. 73. How does faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?

A. Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument by which he receives and applies Christ and his righteousness.

Sola Fide is faith alone in Jesus Christ. It is not a resting faith in Jesus including submission, forsaking, yielding, and commitment. Knowledge, assent, and trust comprise saving faith, not knowledge, assent, and submission or surrender. Obedience, faithfulness, and surrender certainly follow justification and the new birth, but they are not the ground nor the instrument. Jesus is the ground, and faith alone is the instrument. Categories matter.

Advantage #2 – Keeping Categories Distinct

LS often confuses Justification and Sanctification by asking a professing believer, “Have you surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus in every area of your life?” (Law focused). “Are you living a holy enough life?” (Law centered). Instead, the believer should first be asked, “Do you believe in the Risen Savior?” (Gospel centered). “Are you resting in the finished and perfect work of the God-Man? (Gospel focused). Sanctification by faith will be reserved for another article. I am not saying that holy living is irrelevant, unnecessary, or optional. I am saying that godliness is not the ground of anyone’s salvation.

Caspar Olevianus could have been anticipating LS when he wrote, “The Law does not promise freely, but under the condition that you keep it completely… the Gospel promises freely the remission of sins and life, not if we keep the law, but for the sake of the Son of God, through faith.” The Gospel is not conditional. There is nothing a person must do before they believe. Sola Fide is exactly that, “faith alone.” Must a person stop sinning in order to come to Christ? No. Must a person surrender their lives to Jesus so they can believe? No. Is surrender the same as believe? No. Does God justify the ungodly? Yes. There is nothing a person can or must do so that they can trust the Risen Savior. In other words, there is no law they must obey (yield, submit, commit, surrender, etc.) before they believe. Rest in Christ alone, not in Jesus and your surrender. Trust the Savior alone, not Him plus yielding or forsaking sin. If forsaking sin is a prerequisite to coming to Christ, the forsaking is to be 100%. When a person is drawn by the Father and believes, there will certainly be a forsaking of sin, but that is in the category of Sanctification/Of good works, not Justification. We must place surrender, commitment, yielding, submission, and desiring in the Sanctification category.

LS tends to make holy living the test for justification. This also confuses categories. While sweat and toil are necessary in the believer’s quest to mortify sin (and live unto righteousness), hard work is not in the category of justification by faith alone. A believer’s works are not Jesus. Many err by making a Christian’s holy life, “a Christ of it to save them,” as Thomas Wilcox states. Holy living (as great as it is and as much as it should be stressed) is never (now or finally) your justification before a Triune God.

Test Case—Romans 2:13

Romans 2:13 says, “For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.” (ESV) Regularly, LS advocates utilize this passage as a motivation for holy living, so that the Christian will be certain that their profession is valid enough by proving it with good works. “Are you doing the Law?” “Make sure you keep doing the Law?” “Obey.” “Are you a false convert?” Once again, proper categories are essential.

What is the Law/Gospel solution to Romans 2:13? First, the larger context of Romans 1–3a is Law. Paul is systematically dismantling every person, whether they are unrighteous (Chapter 1) or moralistically “righteous” in their own eyes (chapters 2–3a). Paul is insisting that the readers of these chapters agree that they do not have the righteousness required by the Lord (perfect righteousness). Second, the immediate context begins with verse 6 saying, “He will render to each one according to his works.” What does God require? Perfection. Is your life perfect? Has it always been perfect? Paul wants the reader to abandon all hope in and of himself/herself so that he/she will look for the relief provided by God Himself. Third, a normal reading of the text is all that is needed. If people could perfectly obey, why would God condemn them? We know that Adam’s sin has affected each person, so Romans 2:13 is only hypothetical, but the point remains: exactly and entirely obey or you are doomed. Paul will eventually prod them to find their righteousness provided by Another, the God man (Romans 3:21ff.).

LS, in its desire to stress holy living turns Romans 2:13, which is a law designed to drive the unbeliever to acknowledge his need for perfect righteousness, into a law for Christians. This is a category error. The passage is not addressed to Christians to obey. Did you know that the Reformed Confessions and Church Creeds greatly assist keeping categories separate? Ignoring Creeds and Confessions have detrimental effects upon the Church, and this is a case in point. Carnal professors in the church are not a new problem. Theological debates over spurious faith have already occurred. We can learn from the past. This is not a new battle. But we must be careful not to take passages like Romans 2 and wedge them into a sanctification or holy living category. Most every Confession separates their chapters related to the subject this way:

Justification

Sanctification

Of Good works

Just looking at the categories above, one could solve a lot of problems. Categories keep things in and they keep things out. Do not blend categories. Do not confuse categories. Observe the logical progression of categories. Justification leads to God’s sanctifying work which yields good works.

Advantage #3 – Understanding The Different Uses Of God’s Law

The third use of the Law (the Law as a guide to believers) is much different than the first use of the Law (a mirror to condemn the unbeliever). While God’s Law does not change, our relationship to the Law Giver is different after God saves us. As unbelievers, we all stood before God as Creator and Judge. As believers, we stand before God as Father. Instead of condemning Christians, the Law now guides and directs a believer’s life. It is my experience that most LS teachers either do not believe in the different uses of the Law or if they do believe them, they do not teach the differences accurately.

True or false? God accepts frail and sin-tainted works from believers because He accepts His children. The answer is, “true,” and it is directly related to the uses of the Law and LS. God as Judge would never accept any sin-tainted work, yet God as Father loves His children and therefore receives their less-than-perfect works. If Gordon Ramsey, the chef of Master Chef TV fame, judged the cake of an eight-year-old, he might call the child names for making such a bad cake. But if that eight-year-old was his daughter and she baked the cake for his birthday, he would smile and eat every last crumb.

Earthly fathers often chasten disobedience, but they do not kick the sinful child out of the house. Earthly father pity, provide, and protect their children. If not careful, LS teachers confuse the commands of God and deliver God’s Law to Christians as first use and not third use. Instead of wanting to honor the heavenly Father for all that He has done and all that He is, Christians are afraid of disobeying God because they think He might un-adopt them. Instead of believers obeying God out of gratitude for His fatherly care, they obey because they are worried about their standing before God. When the first and third uses of the law are blended, Christians wonder if they are showing a lack of true submission and they question their salvation when they struggle with obedience. These doubts are reoriented when people understand their different relationship to the Lawgiver.

Additionally, rightly teaching the third use of the Law allows pastors and Bible teachers to stress Christian obedience, while steering clear of lawlessness or antinomianism. LS and Reformed alike stress holy living. There is no debate there. Pastors preaching the third use (a guide or norm) sound like they are encouraging the congregation to obey. Instead of motivating the people by fear, dread or doom, the motivation is the love of the Triune God. God loves His children with an everlasting love. God loves Christians so much that He guides them with the Law, for their good and for His glory.

When I was in the LS camp, I often saw the congregation full of false converts and I thought it was my job to root them out. Using the LS model, I spent too much time challenging the faith of the false professor and not adequate time encouraging the weak and frail Christian. I did not have much room for the bruised reed and smoldering wick like Jesus did.

Is it not the privilege of the pastor to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus Christ? Should not the believing congregant, while convicted during the sermon, leave the Lord’s Day service encouraged, built up, and focused on the grace of God for them? Hebrews is essentially a sermon. The epistle drives, chapter by chapter, the listener’s attention to the High Priest, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:2 captures the essence of the author’s goal, saying, “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (ESV) Yes, Jesus did surrender and submit for us. That is good news. Because of Jesus’ life and works, we now have an Advocate through whom we receive God’s Law. It is now a joy to obey it because even our disobedience is forgiven.

https://heidelblog.net/2022/06/my-pilgrimage-from-lordship-to-law-gospel-part-2-test-case-the-rich-young-ruler/

My Pilgrimage From “Lordship” to Law/Gospel (part 3): Assurance

by MIKE ABENDROTH on June 9, 2022

In part 2, we considered the case of the Rich Young Ruler. In this final installment, let us consider one of the most important passages in this debate: Romans 2:13.

Advantage #4–Giving Assurance to Believers

LS regularly calls into question a person’s profession of faith. Bluntly, it wrecks assurance. How? In the LS model, what if the professing Christian shows a lack of true submission and struggles with obedience? How much commitment is needed before someone questions his/her own salvation? How much disobedience is allowed before the professing believer wonders about their own salvation?

During an intense bout of Covid-19-induced pneumonia, my health was not improving. The doctor said three words which are difficult to forget, “acute respiratory failure.” While never put on a ventilator, I did require “Hi Flow” oxygen delivered at the rate of 60 liters per minute for many days. During the darkest times of the sixteen lonely days of “Covid Isolation,” my mind wandered to my possible impending death and what would happen after my last breath. I knew I was a sinner and that God the Creator was holy and righteous. I understood that payment must be made for my sins one way or another (on me or a Substitute). With all that my sick and oxygen deprived mind could muster, I mentally traversed all possible options of surviving Judgment Day: civil goodness, religious deeds, sincere worship and more–but I knew those options were worthless. God required perfection. God requires perfection.

Questions bombarded my weary mind. My thoughts were interrogating me with inquires that I did not seem to ask. I felt like the trial had begun.

Did I surrender to the Lord enough?

Did I obey God enough?

Am I yielding to God enough?

What if I am deceived?

What if I have a false faith?

What if…?

I had no answers, but only thoughts like, “Eternity is a long time.” “My Sin deserves punishment.” “I have earned judgment.” “Now what?”

Finally, a biblical thought flashed through my mind, “My only hope is sola fide. There is no other way I can stand before the Lord. I need an Advocate and Mediator. I need perfect righteousness from Another.” I said to the Lord, “Lord, I know I am tainted by sin and have fallen short of your standards, but Jesus said that if I simply trust Him, I will have eternal life. I trust you and I trust Him. I believe Jesus literally lived for me and died for every one of my sins. I believe Jesus conquered death and is literally returning. I want to live and see my family again, but I submit to your good and right plan. Thank you.” I fell asleep.

Experiences like mine are more common than we might realize. Many ask such eternal questions, not only on their deathbed, but while they are alive and are in their “right mind.” Eternity is a long time. Hell is real. Heaven is holy. If holy living was the ground of people’s salvation, and therefore their assurance was dependent upon righteous living, would Paul, the mature Apostle, question his faith because of his statements in Romans 7? Paul did not do what he wanted, but he did the very thing he hated (Romans 7:15). Should we question Paul’s profession knowing he wrote, “the evil I do not want is what I keep doing?” Was Paul questioning his own salvation in Romans 7? Of course not.

Sadly, Christians sin. Mature Christians rebel. Even Apostles of Jesus Christ fall short of God’s glory and disobey. The issue should not be, “how can you call yourself a Christian because you still sin against a holy God?” Rather, “When you sin against God, are you saddened? Do you desire to please Him? Obey Him?” Christians then answer, “Yes, yes and yes!” If I were to ask, “who put the desire to obey and to hate sinning in your heart?” would they respond with, “CNN,” or “Satan?” While some sins are instantly dealt with at initial salvation, other sin patterns linger. I have been a believer for more than 30 years and I still struggle with a variety of sins. Do you? The popular adage is true, “Jesus paid for the believer’s penalty of sin, the power of sin is vanquished, but the presence of sin in the believer will exist until glorification.”

We never want to be sin apologists, but we do want to be realists. And with that, we trust in God’s sanctifying work so that it is our desire to respond to the Father with quicker remorse and less of a lag time regarding repentance. Out of gratitude, we want to obey the Lord Jesus for being such a wonderful Savior. Since this article is on the Heidelblog, I am compelled to quote the Heidelberg Catechism. How do these questions (and answers) fit into the mold of LS?

114. Can those who are converted to God keep these commandments perfectly?

No, but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that with earnest purpose they begin to live not only according to some, but according to all the Commandments of God.

115. Why then does God so strictly enjoin the ten Commandments upon us, since in this life no one can keep them?

First, that as long as we are alive we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ; secondly, that without ceasing we diligently ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we be renewed more and more after the image of God, until we attain the goal of perfection after this life.

Christians still, regrettably, sin. But are not the sins of Christians paid for by the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes, they are forgiven! No wonder Martin Luther used the Latin phrase, “simul iustus et peccator” (simultaneously justified and sinner). Christians are declared righteous but still sin and will sin all the way until glory. Christians are both justified and sinful at the same time.

LS advocates regularly, and rightly, expose a faith that is spurious. The Reformation also teaches that mere intellectual faith is not saving. Neither spurious faith nor intellectual faith should yield assurance. The difference between the Reformation and LS lies in the Law/Gospel distinction. That is to say, in lieu of directing people primarily to look to their own lives and examine to see if they are faithful, then they can have assurance by looking to the Risen Savior. Looking to the “done” instead of the “do” is critical. Martin Luther’s famous quote goes something like this, “When I look to myself, I do not know how I could be saved, but when I look to the Lord Jesus, I do not know how I could be lost.”

Misunderstanding the Law/Gospel distinctions, including the uses of the Law, assurance is not garnered, but evacuated. Show me someone who regularly sits under LS theology, and I will show you a person who recurrently asks:

Am I saved?

Am I a false convert?

Am I deceived?

Am I faithful enough?

Am I earnest enough?

Am I contrite enough?

Am I good enough?

Am I righteous enough?

Did I repent enough?

Do I pray enough?

Am I holy enough?

Have I read my Bible enough?

My response is from a wise Puritan, Thomas Wilcox (1549–1608), who boldly uttered, “You complain much of yourself. Does your sin make you look more at Christ, less at self?” Enough of the “enough” language. While I do not mind an internal look for evidence and fruit of salvation, I do mind if the looking ends there! The telos of self-observation must be with Christ, not personal motives, intentions, sincerity, works or love. Christian, did you know that?

Jesus seeks and thoroughly saves the lost.

Jesus was faithful enough on the earth.

Jesus was earnest enough.

Jesus was good enough.

Jesus prayed enough.

Jesus is holy enough.

Jesus is righteous enough.

Jesus read the Bible enough.

Jesus evangelized enough

And you, dear Christian, are “in Christ?” Union with Christ Jesus is a reality (Romans 6:1ff.). Looking to Jesus, does not your encouragement level skyrocket? Does not His great salvation prod you to obeying and surrendering out of thankfulness and gratitude? Rejoice that Jesus the Lord loves you with an everlasting love and nothing can separate you from His love (Romans 8:35 ff.). Is Jesus, “Lord?” Of course. Must people completely submit to His lordship in order to be saved? Absolutely not (faith alone). Should believers, responding out of gratitude, long to obey their heavenly Father? Yes! If a Christian’s obedience is wavering, waning and left wanting, should we immediately call them to “examine yourself?” No. Shall we question their salvation? No. A Christian needs the Gospel too. Jesus is not only for justification but for sanctification. Jesus is both for us and in us. Jesus for pardon and Jesus for power. Examine Jesus and His works ten times the amount of time you examine your fruit and evidence of God’s work in your life.

Conclusion

Though my love for many LS proponents remains, my desire for them is to move to a Law/Gospel paradigm. I truly believe if LS embraced a proper comprehension of Law/Gospel, it would cause their followers to rise up and call them (the leaders) blessed.

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