

A Fallacious Distinction

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From a number of otherwise wonderfully edifying sources of kingdom truth has come the notion, teaching and exhortation that the elect of God must advance beyond the mere dimension of salvation and go on to that higher place of absolute surrender, consecration and obedience to the perfect will of God.

Included, of course, would be the integral willingness to lay down one's life for Christ's sake with whatever suffering might be involved for the purpose of advancing the kingdom of God on earth if one expects to be a manifested son of God, ruling and reigning with Christ in order that creation might be delivered from its bondage to decay. In a word, what is being said is that salvation is one thing, but serious discipleship is quite another matter.

When such a distinction is made it reveals a serious misunderstanding of the nature and meaning of biblical salvation, a misunderstanding that is at the heart of the perverse spin that pseudo-orthodoxy puts on soteriology (the study of biblical salvation) so as to make strange bedfellows of conventional evangelical theologians and teachers of the gospel of the kingdom. If, of course, salvation is understood as a fire-escape from the hell of heathen mythology, or even as simply enjoying forgiveness of sin, then such a distinction makes sense, but if it is, instead,---as the Bible clearly presents it---complete wholeness of spirit and soul finally expressed in incarnate glory and originating in and from the harmonious unity of God, then we have seriously veered off the path of fundamental truth and are found in complicity with the confusion that is spiritual Babylon.

The wholeness, which is salvation, is only to be found in Christ Jesus our Lord, and to separate His wholeness from His perfect yieldedness to His Father is unthinkable. No life---certainly not our Lord's---is whole that imagines reserving to itself some personal sovereignty, some dimension of living that is autonomous and independent of God's salvific dominion. Being our own lord in any dimension of life is, in that dimension, to be broken, fragmented, lost to ourselves, in a

state of soulical disintegration, and engaged in the most vain imagination to which man is subjected.

Much of this confusion is traceable to the idea that one can know Christ as Savior without owning Him as Lord. Dear ones, it is as our Sovereign Lord, that Christ saves us. The bondage of sin and death will only yield to the enthroned Christ, to the "Lamb in the midst of the throne." That marvelous gem from the Book of Revelation informs us that sacrificial love rules the universe, and that by so ruling, He saves us.

He saves us by His lordship and rules us by His salvation. In the measure that we reserve to ourselves some right of self-rule, in that measure, we are less than saved, less than whole.

I know, I know, our salvation, with its culmination in glorification, has been already effected by God in Christ, where our life is hid. No one has hammered away at that truth more than I have, but I'm speaking of the aeonian unfolding of that completed work. We need to be saved from self-sovereignty.

The Son of God is whole, and we in Him, because our Father's love for His Son is the root of the Son's love of the Father. St. John could say that we love God because He first loved us, because he understood the relationship between the Father and the Son, which is our essential inheritance in Christ. When love is perfected, obedience in all things is complete. It has been said, and wisely so, "Love God, and do what you will." Our Lord Jesus' love of the Father was the fruit of the Father's love for Him. This, simply, constituted the very wholeness of the life of Christ, which is our life.

"Well, I'm saved, but the kingdom of God is not my top priority in life." Huh uh; I'm sorry; no, no. It don't work that way. [Bad grammar intentional] Few men were clearer about this than E. Stanley Jones who understood that the kingdom of God, the rule of God, is intrinsic to who and what we are, and when we refuse to be ruled absolutely by God, we are contradicting our personhood by a false self.

"I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world,

but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Rom. 12: 1-2 That is, "be saved."

We need to be saved from anything short of total surrender to the gracious sovereignty of God, a sovereignty, that in its wisdom, deliberately brings hardship and affliction into our lives in order to cultivate that trusting surrender which is of the essence of salvation by grace through faith. We may not understand the divine mechanics of such dealings, but we can trust the perfect love and wisdom behind them, the love and wisdom that will not allow us to settle for less than glory.

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