

Discussion Points

Part II – Salvation, Two Natures and Lordship

1. Contrast the **Substitutionary principle** of salvation with the common inclination toward merit based salvation. New Christians need to clearly understand that salvation is not earned, nor kept, through our human effort, in order for them not to reason like the Galatian Christians. *You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*** (Gal. 3:1-3)
2. Discuss the “**event**” of salvation (the “new birth”) as being just the “**first step**” in the spiritual walk with God, just as physical birth is the first step in the human experience of progressing from childhood to adult maturity. Many Christians emphasize the event of salvation (and obviously it isn’t optional), but then fail to emphasize the importance of the Christian’s life between the experience of salvation and the departure from this body. Too many Christians view their daily life as being a difficult and frustrating struggle with sin, to be endured until they are finally delivered through death (an unpleasant, but necessary experience) into heaven. Even though they would like to experience a consistently victorious life, many reason that only “very spiritual” believers are able to achieve that goal.
3. Discuss the importance of understanding **God’s character** as it pertains to **His trustworthiness**. Then discuss the enemy’s strategy of **undermining the character of God** in a Christian’s mind by portraying Him as One who cannot always be counted on to do what is best for those who follow Him. The enemy utilizes the human nature’s propensity toward independence from God to promote distrust in Him, even though the Bible continually reinforces God’s character as loving, perfect, faithful and **absolutely worthy** of my trust.
4. Discuss **how we came to have within us two natures** which are in direct opposition to one another. Also discuss how the human nature is **not** the least bit improved at conversion, in contrast to the common perception that the Holy Spirit’s presence somehow raises the human nature to a new level of goodness. Each Christian needs to know that he has the same potential for committing sins after being saved as before. The human nature is beyond repair. God’s only provision for a victorious life is the **Divine Nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit**.
5. Discuss the need to view the Holy Spirit as a **Person**, God Himself, in contrast to the idea that He is something less, such as an “inspiration” or an “influential force” for good in my life. He should be recognized as a constant Overseer and Companion, and a Person with whom there needs to be continual **communication** and **interaction**, as I would have with a spouse or a close friend. He has a daily plan for my life and wants me to learn to **follow** Him and fit into **His** plans, contrary to the commonly held belief that He is always by my side, but is really only needed for those difficult times when “**I**” determine through my human understanding that I can’t cope alone.

6. Discuss **Christ's "ownership"** of each Christian as a truth that does not in anyway depend upon the Christian's acknowledgment or acceptance of it. Christians need to clearly understand **from the very beginning** that surrender does not imply the giving up of something to God which is not already His. He **has** bought me and therefore to do anything less than unconditionally yield myself to Him is to usurp authority over that which is not mine. He **is** my Lord and I need to acknowledge and accept it. He should not be presented as One who will **"become"** my Lord sometime in the future.

7. Discuss the concept of Lordship as a **"decision" (event)**, a submission of the will to His authority, followed by a process (abiding, sanctification, spiritual growth). This event is represented by the decision of the 2nd group of Israelites to cross the Jordan River into God's chosen place of blessing and fruitfulness (Canaan), where they learned to follow God in the process of conquering the land. The familiar marriage ceremony is also an **event** of commitment ("relinquishment of independence"), followed by the marriage **process** ("learning to live together in harmonious fellowship"). This perspective is in contrast to the prevalent understanding that Lordship is a **goal** that is attained to as a **result** of a "process" of surrender and obedience.

8. Discuss the concept of each Christian fitting into one of **two camps**, one camp being represented by the Israelites who entered into Canaan, and the other camp (probably 80% or more) being represented by the first group of Israelites who refused to believe God and entrust themselves into His care. They did not consider God trustworthy. As a result they found themselves in a desert experience where God faithfully took care of all their temporal needs, but they were **not fruitful** from God's eternal perspective. Typically Christians are viewed as all being on the same path (camp), just at different stages of growth. This perspective tends to view Lordship as a goal arrived at through a process, rather than as a prior event.

9. Discuss the **two** aspects of surrender, which present an obvious opportunity for confusion. There is an **initial** surrender of the **will** to His authority which is an event, followed by the process of surrendering those areas of my **understanding** and **behavior** that He wants to change and/or prune to make me more useful and fruitful. (A wild horse's will must first be broken, after which the process of being trained can follow.) The "yoke" referred to in Matthew 11:28-30 speaks of the relinquishment of my independence to Him (event), followed by a process of learning to walk in harmonious fellowship with Him, "getting to know Him".

10. Discuss how many Christians mistakenly equate Lordship to a surrender of **external behavior**. This misconception typically results in a Christian repeatedly committing to total surrender and obedience, only to be soon disappointed by the lack of anticipated purity and godliness. It is then easy to conclude that such struggles with the human nature must be due to insincerity, lack of understanding, or lack of commitment on their part. Many Christians repeat this process over and over again through the years.