

INDEPENDENCE FOR ALL?

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After forty years of wandering in the wilderness Israel is finally about to enter the land promised by God to Abraham. But prior to their entrance, God issued a series of solemn warnings to the people, one of the most important of which is recorded in Deuteronomy 8:11-20. A summary of God's warning is, "Beware lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes lest when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the Lord your God. Otherwise, you may say in your heart, My power and strength of my hand made me this wealth. But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, (Dt 8:11-18).

Basically, the warning consisted of an admonition to the people of Israel that as they began to prosper and their material wealth increased, not to slip into an attitude of independence and self-reliance. This would only lead to a general devaluation of God, an exaltation of self and eventual rejection of God and His word. Israel's first attempt to inhabit the Promised Land was entered into with a self-sufficient and presumptuous attitude and resulted in their tragic defeat by pagan forces (Dt 1:41-44; Nm 14:39-45). God led them into the wilderness for forty years so they would learn to be dependent on Him for all their needs, and to learn not to attribute His blessings to their idols, their self-effort, or their own personal merit. "And he humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, *that He might make you understand* that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Dt 8:3). God was teaching them to be dependent on Him alone. And when God did finally bring them into the land of promise it was to show them that it was He alone, and not their idols, self-effort, or own merit that had won them the land and its blessings.

God's warning to the nation of Israel contains an important biblical principle which every Christian needs to apply to their life, and this principle is; *the value which we place on God is directly proportional to the sense of dependence we have on God*. Our appreciation for His gifts, our frequency and intensity of supplication to Him in prayer, our trust in Him, our fear of displeasing Him, and our diligence in pursuing a holy life that glorifies Him . all are directly proportional to the sense of dependence we have on a sovereign God. The more independent and self-reliant we are the less we will look to God, the less we will trust in Him alone, the less thankful we will be for His blessings, the more careless and less concerned we will be in our obedience to Him, and the more sin and spiritual pride we will tolerate in our life, and the life of the church. Man naturally trusts in himself and exalts himself in all his accomplishments. It is a principle of human

nature that when people live in a continuous state of ease, prosperity, and accommodation, this tends to foster a sense of independence and self-sufficiency. This principle was born out over and over again in the long, sad history of God's chosen people. When they were being harassed by their enemies and being persecuted by their foes, then Israel would turn to God and look to Him for deliverance. But as soon as they had rest, they did evil again before You+ (Nehemiah 9:26-28; cf. Judges 3:11, 12). It was this tendency to self-reliance and independence which was the chief downfall of the church in Laodicea, we have become rich and have need of nothing+ (Revelation 3:17). And it is the danger Christians face today, especially in a comparatively prosperous culture that prizes independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency.

We are no different than the people of Israel, or the church of Laodicea. The same principle that led to their treachery and unfaithfulness is still operative in every one of us. We are no less prone to self-sufficiency, independence, and idolatry than they. If anything we are more prone because the threats to our comfort and security are not nearly as ominous as those faced by Israel or the early church. Our *need* for dependence is not nearly as conspicuous. We are not surrounded by pagan nations that are seeking to conquer us and rob us of our lands and possessions; we do not live under the domination of a Roman empire that tortured Christians for sport and sought to destroy the Christian faith. As Christians in America we face none of these threats, and on the rare occasion we do, as soon as the fear of danger has passed we go right back to our self-sufficient and self-reliant lives. For about two weeks after 9/11 church attendance across the country went up dramatically. But once the danger seemed to be over people soon settled back into their old routines and quickly forgot about God.

The threat we face is much more spiritually dangerous. Today both the culture and the church praise and exalt our unlimited human potential, they exaggerate our innate goodness in the name of self-esteem, they promote and admire the self-made+ person and encourage us to emulate them, and they both encourage us to trust in our own abilities and intrinsic self-worth. In nigh on every arena of society, both secular and religious, this spirit of independence and self-sufficiency is looked upon as a virtue. The ultimate end of this independent spirit is that it robs God of the glory to which only He is entitled and bestows it on ourselves. We get to take partial credit for our achievements and attribute God's blessings in part to our own self-effort, hard work, natural abilities, and personal merit, which in effect is the idolatry of self. And it is the god of self that dominates not only our culture, but also much of the professing church today.

The same principle applies to how we view the work of God in redemption. The emphasis we place on the necessity of salvation by grace alone is directly proportional to our sense of dependence on God alone for salvation. What is true in the material

realm is also true in the spiritual; a person's sense of dependence is proportional to their sense of *need*. Their understanding of the depth and hopelessness of their own sinful condition, and their level of despair to remedy their own helpless and hopeless condition will determine how they understand their need. And the magnitude of their need will determine their amount of dependence, whether it is partial or total. The level of dependence will also determine the value one places on grace. The value that is placed on grace alone is directly proportional to the sense of need and the amount of benefit derived from grace. Are we completely dependent on grace for the benefits of salvation, or only mostly dependent on grace and partially on our own abilities? The answer to this question will determine the value placed on grace. The greater one's dependence on grace the greater they will esteem God's grace. For this reason God often leads people into the wilderness of the consequences of their own sin to humble them and make them sensible of their utter insufficiency and bring them to see their hopeless, miserable, and helpless condition. After people have tried their own wisdom and various schemes and found them totally inadequate to lead them out, when they find themselves wandering about and always ending up back in the same place, when they realize that they are hopelessly lost, then they are brought at last to stand still and despair, and to do nothing but call for help, if perhaps someone might hear, have mercy on them, and lead them out of the wilderness.

The troubles which people have as a result of their sin cause them to reflect on their sin, because it is these things of which they are afraid. And when a person is afraid of what surrounds him, he is more apt to dwell on these and see how terrible and frightful they are. And when people are afraid they are more prone to notice their sin than at other times, and this makes them more aware of how just God is and how vile they are. They try and try to appease God by their own works but it fails, until at last they are brought to the point where all their self-justification and self-effort is futile and they see themselves rightly exposed to God's righteous and just wrath, with nothing left with which to defend themselves. God has designed salvation in such a way that in every aspect of its application man is entirely dependent on God in every way imaginable. In no aspect of salvation does man act or think independently of God or in cooperation with God. If a natural man had the ability in and of himself to cooperate with God in any aspect of salvation he would no longer be completely dependent on God and His grace, and even more, God would not be entitled to all the glory.

Given Israel's track record of disobedience and their penchant for idolatry there was a real danger that as their prosperity and self-reliance increased their sense of dependence would decrease to the point where they considered themselves to be self-sufficient and independent of God. If Israel was to be faithful and obedient they needed to remember that God was the ultimate cause of their redemption from Egyptian

bondage and their subsequent blessing. God continues in chapter nine of Deuteronomy to make it very clear to the people of Israel that there was absolutely nothing within them that would have predisposed God to redeem and bless them. Knowing that fallen sinners are apt to cherish an inflated opinion of their own self-worth, God tells the people three times in as many verses just so there is no misunderstanding and to make it perfectly clear, %Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven them out before you, ~~B~~Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this landõ It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their landõ Know then it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people+ (Dt 9:4-6). God makes it crystal clear that Israel's redemption and blessing was the consequence of God's undeserved and unmerited grace, and in no way owing to anything meritorious on their part. God had not looked down through the corridor of time and foreseen something in Israel that disposed Him to place His love and grace on them, and choose them from among all the other nations on earth. In fact, they were infinitely unworthy in every way, because %From the day you left the land of Egypt until you arrived in this place, you have been rebellious against the Lordõ You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day I knew you+(Dt 9:7, 24).

In light of their past Israel had every reason to feel the need for their total, unqualified dependence on God's grace and power. The greater the creature's dependence on the Creator, the greater the *reason* he has to depend on Him. Man is now much more dependent upon God's grace and power than before his fall into sin. Our dependence is much more conspicuous now than before the fall, because now every aspect of our being is corrupted with sin and enslaved to sin; our mind, our will, our desires, our emotions . everything about us is dominated by sin. It is easier to neglect those things on which we are not dependent, or dependent on to a lesser degree than it is to neglect those things on which we are most dependent. It is easier to neglect prayer than it is to neglect eating because we feel less dependent on prayer than food. It is easier to neglect spiritual duties than it is to neglect our work on which our temporal livelihood depends because we see no immediate benefit from spiritual duties. The reason most people do not live in total dependence on God's grace and power is because they do not see any reason why they should. And the reason they do not see any great need is because they do not see themselves as God sees them, nor do they appreciate the infinite gulf that exists between God's standard of righteousness and ours. The greater we understand our complete dependence on God for every area of our life, both materially and spiritually, the greater we see how insignificant, corrupt, and empty we really are, and how infinitely great and glorious God is and how infinitely superior His strength and wisdom and power is to ours.

The more men exalt themselves the less they will exalt God. God's ultimate goal in redemption is to make Himself appear all sufficient, all glorious, and man as he is in himself empty, to make Himself appear all and man nothing. God has taken mankind's lost, low, and empty condition, his miserable and corrupt propensity to rebellion against God's love and grace, his hateful animosity toward God, and his determination to live independently of God, and turned it into an occasion to display and advance His own glory by showing us our absolute and total dependence on The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity is glorified in God's work of redemption. We are dependent on the work of each One for salvation; the Father for sending the Son, the Son for carrying out the will of the Father and accomplishing the work of redemption, and the Holy Spirit for applying redemption to those whom God has chosen for salvation from eternity past.

When human ability is introduced into God's work of salvation, even if it is no more than our ability to believe apart from a sovereign work of God in the heart, the sense of dependence on God alone for salvation will decrease proportionately, and salvation becomes a mixture of grace and human ability, even if that ability is only providing the deciding factor in salvation . our decision.+To the degree that a system of salvation appeals to or relies on human ability to actuate salvation, to the same degree it subverts and disavows man's entire dependence on God alone for salvation. All systems and schemes of religion that would decrease our absolute dependence on God also rob from the glory that belongs to God alone and thwart God's ultimate purpose in redemption . His own glory. How ever much these schemes may affirm our dependence on God for salvation, they deny a dependence that is unconditional and universal. They affirm we are dependent on God for some things relating to salvation such as His provision of it, and His free offer of it, but not for all things; not for who is saved, not for our faith, not for the desire to believe or the ability to believe. There is a total dependence on the part of the Father for giving His Son, and on the Son for providing redemption, but not a total dependence on the Holy Spirit for applying redemption to the heart and bringing about a person's conversion.

Not only is a person totally dependent on God to *become* a Christian, they are totally dependent on God to *be* a Christian. Not only are we totally dependent on God to convert us, grant us saving faith, and a new nature, we are likewise totally dependent on Him to sanctify us, subdue our sinful nature, and enable us to bear fruit for His glory. Since sanctification is as much a gift of God's grace as salvation, the same principle of dependence applies in sanctification as in salvation. The degree and intensity with which we pursue holiness is directly proportional to our sense of dependence on God. The greater the sense of independence the less will be our pursuit of *genuine* holiness. This is not to say some people will not still pursue holiness, just that the holiness they

pursue will be a selective, self-serving, and self-defined holiness. What they avoid and pursue will conform to their personal prejudices and cultural taboos. Their standard for holiness is a manmade system or list of rules, and all the focus is on external behaviors. They will avoid sins that are obvious or to which they have no special inclination, but ignore, justify, or redefine sins of the heart such as pride, self-righteousness, greed, mean-spiritedness, and spiritual arrogance. It is a holiness pursued independent of God's grace and power, but rather the person relies on their own ability, and the motivation is their own glory. This always results in a self-righteous and Pharisaical attitude. This holiness measures its vigor by comparing its efforts with the efforts of others rather than with God's standard.

For people who become ensnared by this type of cultural fundamentalism, evangelism often becomes one of the yardsticks by which a person's spirituality is judged. The more zealous they are for evangelism, and the more people they can say they have evangelized, then the more spiritual they are assumed to be, even if that evangelism is no more than handing out gospel tracks in a public park. But Jesus identified the motive for this kind of evangelism; *you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves+* (Mt 23:15). The motivation is to make a good showing in the flesh among their peers and to boast in the flesh of others. Each person evangelized is another notch on their spiritual merit badges, as are all their self-serving attempts at holiness. Their obedience is motivated by love of self and spiritual pride, not love toward God. They want to be exalted in the eyes of men and pursue their own glory, not the glory of Christ, and if there were no chance of their efforts being noticed by others, or if they had no opportunity to tell others of their good deeds, then holiness holds no attraction for them.

On the opposite side, this independent spirit is often manifested when professing Christians deny the Lordship of Jesus. How do they do this? By thinking they can have Jesus as Savior but not submit to Him as Lord. They believe Jesus will save them while at the same time they staunchly maintain their autonomy and independence from His authority over their life. They want to be saved from hell but have no intention of forsaking their sin.

Unfortunately the principle of Jesus's Lordship has often been misunderstood and misrepresented as a form of salvation by works, but Scripture is very clear; *Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ+* (Ac 2:36). Jesus cannot be divided. He demands total commitment and devotion from all who would be His disciples (Mk 8:34-38). To say that a person can have Jesus as Savior but not submit to Him as Lord is the same as saying Jesus will save us even though we are habitually living in active, deliberate rebellion to Him, something the apostle John's first epistle flatly contradicts (1 Jn 1:6; 2:3-6, 29; 3:3-10; 5:2, 3). A faith

that does not result in the pursuit of a holy life and a desire for obedience is no different than the faith of demons (Jm 2:19, 10).

True salvation always results in a transformed life because it is a work of God, not the result of the proper use of our free choice. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal 5:24). Denying the Lordship of Christ as a necessary component of genuine conversion divorces repentance from salvation and sanctification from justification and replaces a loving relationship with mere mental assent. "If you love Me you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15; cf. 14:21, 23, 24). People who profess to love Jesus above all else in their heart will also love Him in their practice. When Jesus and everything else stand in competition, what a person chooses is the true test of their love. The mark of genuine sincerity insisted upon most by Jesus is that we deny ourselves, sell all, forsake the world, take up our cross, and follow Him wherever He may go; "Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil;" (1 Jn 3:7-8a). People who do not love Jesus in their practice do not love Him in their heart.

Tragically many people have been told that once they have made a profession of faith, prayed a "sinner's prayer", been baptized, or "accepted" Jesus they have done all that is necessary for salvation. Their place in heaven is secure. This past summer hundreds of Southern Baptist pastors signed a document at their national convention affirming their agreement with this very teaching. But Paul exhorted sinning members of the church in Corinth to "examine yourselves" as to whether their faith was genuine (2 Cor 13:5). And at the close of His Sermon on the Mount Jesus warned of people who would say to Him, "Lord, Lord" (Mt 7:21-23), and yet are self-deceived because Jesus says He never knew them. Many people who have evoked a superficial belief in Jesus ultimately cannot endure the teaching and demands of Jesus (Jn 6:66; 8:30, 31, 59). Jesus gives this as a distinguishing character of those who are truly His disciples, and who have a genuine saving faith; it is always accompanied by perseverance in obedience to Christ (Jn 8:31; Mt 10:22). "He became to all those *who obey Him* the source of eternal salvation" (Hb 5:9; cf. Jn 3:36).

Often these same people will cry out to God during times of trial and tragedy in their life, thinking He is obligated to answer their pleas for help. It is only from low thoughts of Jesus and exalted opinions of themselves that people think He is obligated to show mercy to those who have never exercised any love toward Him nor ever shown the least amount of gratitude for even one mercy they have already received from Him. Consider the low, mean view of God required by those who think He is more obliged to hear what they say to Him, than they are to regard what He has to say to them. Only a perverse view of Jesus would think that He is obliged to dispense His pardoning grace at the beck and call of those who have no intention of submitting to His authority and have

every intention of continuing to sin against His grace. Think what an inflated view of man and despicably low view of God is required to imagine that God is so desperate for fellowship with us that He would allow Himself to be continually abused and forfeit His sovereign glory all to accommodate someone's sinful life. Such people demonstrate that they worship a God of their own imagination, not the God of the Bible. They do not know that God is God.

Not only does the denial of Jesus's Lordship contradict Scripture, but it goes against *reason*, and it does so in several ways. It is unreasonable because of *who* Jesus is. God has highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name (Phil 2:9). And what name has God bestowed on Him; every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:11). God has bestowed on Him the name of *Lord*, that is, God's own covenant name. And God Himself has decreed that at the name of Jesus (that is, the name that belongs to Jesus, i.e. *Lord*) every knee should bow (Phil 2:10). What earthly monarch would tolerate any of his subjects living in open, defiant rebellion against his authority; especially after he had bestowed gracious and undeserved favors on those same subjects? The fact that it is *God Almighty* who demands submission to His authority, not a mere earthly king, should be reason enough to silence all opposition and objections to Jesus's Lordship. Jesus is infinitely loved by the Father, continually worshiped and adored by the angels, and the demons tremble in His presence, but yet man thinks he can spurn His majesty, snub His divine nature, despise His authority, and reject His government and still consider himself to be a Christian and a recipient of His saving grace. This is not only unreasonable, it is sheer self-deception. If we find fault with God's government we put ourselves in the position of thinking we are fit to be God's counselors. We think that we are wiser than God; that we can devise a better system; that God must acquiesce to our fallen conception of what is fair or just; that our finite, fallen human wisdom is superior to God's infinite divine wisdom. But all human wisdom is dictated by self-love and self-interest. What poor miserable creatures they must be who think that God's ways must conform to their human sense of fairness, or be on the level of their own understanding? Who are they to demand God explain Himself and submit His decrees for man's approval? Consider the arrogance on the part of those who think they can countermand God's own directions on how Jesus is to be worshiped and served. Who is man that he should set himself up as judges over the Most High God; that he should call God to give an account of Himself (Dn 4:35)? If we appreciated the distance that exists between Jesus and us we would see how unreasonable it is to deny His Lordship.

It is unreasonable given the nature of man's *dependence* on Jesus. The fact that man is totally dependent on Jesus should be sufficient reason to submit to His authority. Man is dependent on Jesus for his very *existence*. All things are His, because He created all things from that which is not seen; He was not dependent upon any preexisting

substance (Hb 11:3). Everything that exists was spoken into existence from nothing by the power of His word. Therefore everything that exists does so because He created it, and it is completely dependent on Him for its existence. Nothing in the entire universe exists or can exist independently from God. By Him all things were created (Jn 1:3, 10), all things have been created by Him and for Him, and in Him all things hold together (Col 1:16, 17; cf. Job 34:14, 15). All creatures, all matter, all time and space are entirely the result of His power and are therefore subject to and for His pleasure (Pv 16:4; Rm 11:36). And since everything is from Jesus, so they are sustained by Jesus, and would dissolve into nothing if He did not uphold them. God typically uses means to accomplish His work, but even the means God uses are completely dependent on Him for their success. How irrational for the creature to think that he can live one moment independent from his Creator. If man were truly independent of God; if he truly possessed an unrestricted free will, he would cease to exist. For governments to think they can exist independent and separated from God and His sovereign control and influence is total self-deception. To attempt to divorce God from human government is an exercise in futility. He who sits in the heavens laughs (Ps 2:4). If all creation submits to God's authority (Job 38-40), and is dependent on God for its subsistence (Ps 104; 145:15, 16), why does man think he is exempt? And if we are incapable of living even one moment independent from such a Person, to reject His authority is an unreasonable act.

Not only is man totally dependent on Jesus for his *temporal* existence, but he is equally dependent on Jesus for the state of his *eternal* existence. Either man will live eternally in heaven with Jesus or in hell with Satan and his angels (Rv 20:15; 21:1-8). It is the Son who gives life to whom He wishes (Jn 5:21); all judgment has been given to the Son (Jn 5:22); ~~an~~ an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment+(Jn 5:28, 29). For someone to snub the authority of the Person who holds the eternal state of their soul in His hands is not only unreasonable, but demonstrates that such people do not take His threats and warnings seriously. Somehow they do not think Jesus will judge them and consign them to an eternal torment in hell. Somehow they think they will escape His wrath and judgment. They never stop to consider others who also thought as they think but are now in torment waiting to be consigned to the lake of fire for eternity. Here is one reason why so few are truly saved, and why so many who think they are saved perish. Those who live hoping to go to heaven yet continue to live in their sin usually continue to do so until death overtakes them and their punishment comes upon them. When someone's assurance of salvation grants them the liberty to continue in sin then that is a sure sign they are not truly converted, but rather they are self-deceived. If they truly believed there was a risk of their going to hell they would not live as they do.

It is unreasonable because of the *company* in which it places those who disavow Jesus's Lordship. Peter and Jude identified those who denied the Lordship of Jesus Christ as false teachers (2 Pt 2:1; Ju 4). The apostle John stated that many antichrists have arisen; i.e. those who teach Jesus is someone other than He really is (1 Jn 2:18-22; 4:1-6). To willingly place oneself in the company of those who are under the condemnation of God is very unreasonable.

It is unreasonable because rejecting Jesus's authority contradicts the nature of *genuine love*. Who would seriously consider as genuine a profession of love from someone who spent their life living in opposition to, or made no effort to please the one they professed to love? Love is always expressed and validated by actions, not just words; *little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth* (1 Jn 3:18). True love always seeks to please the object of its affection, even if that love never rises above the love of self. A person who preeminently loves self will devote all their time and energy to the goal of pleasing self. Even those who go to the extreme of taking their own life, barring any mental disorder, do so not because they hate themselves, but because they love themselves too much to subject themselves any longer to their circumstances. When someone refuses to submit to Jesus's authority they simply demonstrate that they love something else greater than they love Jesus, and that something else is their idol. To profess a love for Jesus and yet have no desire to please Him is not only unreasonable, but it demonstrates that instead of love they actually have great enmity toward Jesus. They actively oppose His will; they oppose His government; they oppose His authority; they oppose His kingdom; they oppose His commands; they oppose His honor and glory. Jesus seeks one thing and they seek the exact opposite. Rather than being in league with Jesus they show they are willing soldiers in Satan's army opposing the kingdom of God.

People do not come to Jesus because they *will not* come: *You are unwilling to come to Me that you might have life* (Jn 5:40). Now in saying that people are unwilling to come to Jesus, this does not mean they are unwilling to be delivered from guilt, from temporal problems, or even from hell. They are perfectly willing to be delivered from all this and more, but that does not mean they are willing to come to Jesus. They are unwilling to take Him as He is in Scripture, so they try to divide Him (Jn 5:39; 8:23, 24, 46, 47). There are some things in Jesus they like and there are things they greatly dislike. But to take Jesus as He is offered in the gospel is not something they are willing to do, because in doing so they must of necessity part with all their sins; they must renounce the world, part with their own self-righteousness, and admit their total dependence on Him. But most would rather run the risk of going to hell than to do that. The reason people will not come to Christ is they are enemies of God. The natural man has a reigning enmity against God so that he has no desire to come to Christ as He is, because Christ is God; He is of the same nature, so they obstinately refuses to submit

to Him as Lord and cling to their own sovereignty. They are enemies of Christ's authority.

Very few who are under this self-deception will give up their cause and concede they are going to hell; yet there are only a few who despair of their own efforts, give up their cause, submit to Jesus, and do not go to hell. Everyday many people who never imagined they would be in hell find themselves consigned there for eternity. As long as they are living they flatter themselves that they are safe from God's wrath, so they go on sinning and rejecting Jesus's authority, all the while persuading themselves they will never face God's righteous judgment. They never leave the broad way that leads to destruction. They attempt to climb over into heaven another way rather than enter by the narrow gate. They stubbornly refuse to relinquish their autonomy and independence.

When the true nature of conversion is allowed to fall into obscurity, then any profession of faith and any interest in religion is accepted as genuine salvation. Soon the world begins to pour into the church and dictate its worship and message. Then, congregations composed of worldly, unconverted people will no longer tolerate preaching that affirms the true nature of conversion, the doctrines of grace, the nature of God, and the nature of man. Instead they demand preaching that legitimizes their worldly lifestyle, or does not call into question their shallow and superficial faith, and affirms their own intrinsic goodness and self-worth. They will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths (2 Tim 4:3). So today we have the myth of the carnal Christian; the myth of the self-esteem gospel; the myth that we can choose Christ whenever we want; the myth that God speaks directly to us by means of private subjective revelation; the myth of salvation without repentance; the myth that human reason can judge the truths of Scripture . which truths to accept or reject, what is relevant or irrelevant, what is applicable and what is not. The gospel becomes a means of personal empowerment to enable us to accomplish all our self-serving goals and obtain all our selfish desires. The real tragedy of denying the Lordship of Christ is that it provides many who are not truly Christians with a false sense of security that they are genuine believers. They are taught to place their hope for salvation in something they did. They have a dependence on their own self-righteousness. They flatter themselves that they have done all that is necessary for salvation, persuading themselves that all their sins are forgiven. As long as those who have been misled by this teaching continue to believe it they will never seek a true salvation, and as long as they live will never be persuaded otherwise until death reveals their hope to have been a false hope (Mt 7:21-23). It is nothing more than the old heresy of antinomianism.

God's principles are timeless; the value we place on God is directly proportional to our sense of dependence on God. A decreased sense of dependence on God always results in increased self-reliance and independence from God. And when self-reliance and independence increase, God is devalued proportionally. There are only two systems of salvation: either salvation is all of God and as such man is totally and entirely dependent on God for his salvation, or salvation is a result of human effort and self-reliance. Even after forty years of suffering the consequences of their own sin Israel still remained self-reliant and idolatrous. They never learned to be totally dependent on God. While they never again engaged in the worship of foreign idols after their return from Babylonian captivity, when it came to salvation they still relied on their own self-righteousness, their unique heritage, and their own ability to keep the law. Today millions of professing Christians are self-deceived because they base their assurance of salvation on something they did; a choice, a prayer, a decision, and not in any change that God has wrought in them. God has provided all. We only need to come in humble dependence on what He has provided, abandon any attempts at self-effort or any notions of our own ability, forsake our sins and cast ourselves on His grace and mercy. It is God's pure grace that He applies this salvation to whomever He chooses. And those whom He has chosen are to attribute their salvation to nothing but His sovereign good pleasure and live a life of conscious, daily dependence on Him to accomplish all His good pleasure in our life.

So, how dependent are you? Some? Mostly? Significantly? Anything less than total dependence is still self-reliance. God will not share His glory with another. ~~Not~~ Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory. But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases+ (Psalm 115:1, 3).