

SAVED By Grace Alone

A Biblical Analysis of the Lordship Salvation Issue

“**For by grace ye are saved**” (Eph. 2:5,8). If a person is saved, he is saved in only one way: *by the marvelous, matchless grace of God!*

What does this mean? What is **GRACE**? Grace is God’s *unmerited favor*, His *undeserved kindness*. Grace is God’s approval, God’s acceptance, God’s favor towards the sinner because of Jesus Christ. None of it is deserved. None of it is earned. The sinner does not merit it and cannot merit it. God has graciously and freely poured out His love and kindness toward the sinner who believes on His Son.

The Bible gives its own definition of God’s grace. In Ephesians chapter 2 Paul discusses salvation by grace alone. He defines God’s grace as “**His kindness toward us** [the undeserving ones described in Eph. 2:1-3] **through Christ Jesus**” (Eph. 2:7). In Titus chapter 3 Paul writes that a person is saved purely by the mercy and grace of God (see verses 5 and 8, “not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He saved us . . . justified by His grace”). In Titus 3:4 the grace of God is defined as “**the kindness and love of God, our Saviour, toward man** [even the undeserving man described in verse 3, “foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts, etc.”].

The following relationships help us to better understand the grace of God:

Saved By Grace Alone

The Relationship Between GRACE and WAGES

Grace has nothing to do with wages. A wage is something that a person works for and earns. Grace is something a person receives that he does not deserve and that he cannot and did not earn. A wage is payment for work done. Grace is something freely given based upon the work done by Another, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Relationship Between GRACE and DEBT

Grace has nothing to do with debt. Debt is something that is owed. Debt has to do with work and earnings. If a person works for someone, then that person owes him something. He needs to pay the worker for the work done. Grace is something freely given. God does not owe anyone salvation. If God were to give us what we have earned and what He owes us, it would be **eternal death** (Rom. 6:23a).

The Relationship Between GRACE and REWARD

Grace has nothing to do with receiving a reward. A reward is something that is given in return for good or evil done. Salvation is not a reward which God gives to a person in return for the good that the person has done. Salvation is **by grace**, based only upon the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It is based upon what He has done, not upon what the sinner has done. If God were to reward us for how we have lived, the reward would be eternal punishment. We deserve nothing less than hell.

The Relationship Between GRACE and MERCY

Grace focuses upon all that God gives to the sinner which the sinner does not deserve [such as eternal life, forgiveness of sins, peace with God, etc.]. Mercy focuses upon all that God does not give to the

miserable sinner which he *does* deserve [such as God's wrath, punishment, eternal death, hell, etc.]. God is gracious to the believing sinner in freely giving to Him the gift of Christ and all that comes with the gift of His Son (Romans 8:32), all of which he does not deserve. God is merciful to the believing sinner in that He has withheld His judgment and wrath upon him, all of which the sinner justly deserves.

The Relationship Between GRACE and FREE JUSTIFICATION

“Being justified **freely** by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). When the Bible says that sinners ARE JUSTIFIED FREELY, what does this mean?

A key passage which helps us to understand this word “freely” is John 15:25—“But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, **They hated me without a cause**” [this phrase ‘without a cause’ is the same Greek word translated ‘freely’ in Romans 3:24]. What does it mean when it says that the Lord's enemies hated Him WITHOUT A CAUSE? It means that they had no reason to hate Him. There was not one thing that Christ did to deserve their hatred. Their hatred was undeserved and unearned.

Now let us apply this same meaning to Romans 3:24. The sinner is JUSTIFIED FREELY. He is justified “without a cause.” There is no reason [found in the sinner] why God should justify this person. There is nothing that the sinner has done to deserve justification or salvation. The sinner is justified FREELY. This justification is not the result of anything that the sinner did. This justification or salvation is totally undeserved and unearned. It is by grace and it is totally free. The reason the sinner is saved is found in God, not in the sinner. It is based on the Lord Jesus Christ—*who He is* and *what He has done* on Calvary's cross. It is not based on the sinner's anything. It is based on God's everything. God and God alone does the saving. Salvation is of the Lord! “Saved by grace alone, this is all my plea!” “Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!”

The Relationship Between GRACE and BOASTING

If a person is saved by grace, then boasting [in self] is absolutely and totally excluded. “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). Salvation is by grace and not of works, “lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8). All the sinner can do is boast and glory in the Lord, “That, according as it is written, He that glorieth [boasteth], let him glory [boast] in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:31).

Boasting says, “Look at what I have done! Look at what I have earned! Look at the good I have performed! Look at my good works! Look at what I have accomplished! Look at my dedication! Look at my commitment! Look at my love for the Saviour! Look at my surrender to Christ! Look at my obedience to His commands! Look at my submission to His Word!” **ALL SUCH BOASTING IS EXCLUDED** because salvation is by grace through faith. The person saved by grace says, “**Look at what my Saviour has done! Look at what He has accomplished!**” The person who is saved looks away from SELF and looks unto the crucified and risen Saviour!

The Relationship Between GRACE and WORKS

Consider Romans 11:5-6, “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

Grace and works are two principles that are **utterly opposed**. They are **mutually exclusive**. They are contrary the one to the other. If you have grace then you cannot have works. If you have works, then you cannot have grace. If you have a free gift, then it cannot be earned or paid for. If you work for something and earn it, then it cannot be a free gift. If it is a debt, then it cannot be grace. If it is a reward, then it cannot be grace. Salvation is either all of grace or else it is all of works. And the Bible insists that it is **all of grace**, “not of works” (Eph. 2:8; Tit. 3:5).

You cannot and must not add works in any shape, form or manner to the grace of God. Why not? “. . . otherwise grace is no more grace.” When it comes to our salvation, God wants and God deserves and God demands **all of the credit!** God does not want most of the credit and thus allow man to have a little of the credit! No, God gets all of the glory and all of the credit, because it is God who alone does the saving! As the hymn says, “**God’s grace has planned it all**--‘tis mine but to believe and recognize the work of love and Christ receive.”

If man were to deserve some of the credit for salvation (even a little), then man would have some basis whereby he could boast. But God says that boasting is **totally excluded** (Rom. 3:27) and that “no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:29). Salvation is something that the sinner does not deserve at all, not even in the slightest bit. A person is saved **by the free, unmerited favor and grace of God PLUS NOTHING ELSE!**

In considering the relationship between grace and works it is helpful to examine Romans 4:4, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” Here is the person who works! This person is a total stranger to the grace of God. He knows nothing of the grace of God. He foolishly thinks that he will be blessed and rewarded for his works. He foolishly thinks that God owes him something because of how he lives. He somehow thinks that his works and his love for God and his commitment to God and his surrender to God and his obedience to God have earned him salvation. Quite the contrary! The only reward he will get is eternal death.

In Romans 4:5 we have a description of the person who is justified freely by God’s grace: “But to him **that worketh not**, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Notice that he is the person **THAT DOES NOT WORK!** He does not work at all! He is not trusting or counting on anything that he has done. He realizes that there is not one thing that he has ever done that could earn one drop of favor or approval or acceptance before a holy God!

He does not work! What then does he do? He believes! He believes on the God who justifies freely by His grace! We must not miss the

significance of Romans 4:5, “**that worketh not, but believeth.**” This tells us very clearly that faith is not a work. This person does not work but he believes. Faith is not a work. Rather, faith is resting upon the work of Another. Faith is resting all of one’s weight on the WORTH (the Person, *who He is*), on the WORK (*what He has done*) and on the WORD (*what He has said*) of Jesus Christ. Faith is non-meritorious. If believing were a work, then we could boast about our faith: “Look at what I have done! I have believed!” How silly! Believing is not some good work that we do. Believing is a humble recognition on the part of the guilty, broken and contrite sinner that he has done **no good** before a holy God and that his only hope is found in Jesus Christ. There is nothing good about a person’s faith. It is the Saviour who is good and who is great, and our faith must be in Him. Faith in itself gives us no merit before God. Faith does not boast except in a crucified and risen Saviour!

The Relationship Between FAITH and GRACE

“For BY GRACE are ye saved THROUGH FAITH” (Eph. 2:8). Faith and grace go together. Why? Faith is the “hand of the heart” that reaches out and receives God’s free gift which is totally undeserved and unmerited. We need to make a difference between the gift (salvation) and the reception of the gift (faith).¹

The Relationship Between JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE and WORKS

Consider Romans 3:28; 4:6, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith **without** [apart from] the deeds of the law . . . Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness **without** [apart from] works.” Justification by grace is totally “without” or “apart from” works.

¹See our study, “What is the Gift of God in Ephesians 2:8?” (30¢).

This same Greek word is used in Hebrews 4:15 of Jesus Christ who was “without sin.” This means that the Saviour had no sin whatsoever. He was totally WITHOUT SIN. Likewise, justification or salvation by grace has no works whatsoever! God saves the believing sinner totally apart from any works which he has done (Tit. 3:5).

If you charge the character of Jesus Christ with just one little sin, then you have totally destroyed [not actually but by accusation] the perfect, sinless character of the Saviour. You have made Him a sinner [by attributing sin to Him]. Likewise, if you add one little work of **any kind** to salvation then you have totally destroyed the gospel and it is no longer salvation by grace. Works must never be added as a requirement for salvation (“you must do such and such in order to be saved”). Justification is totally apart from works.

The true gospel is the “**gospel of the grace of God**” (Acts 20:24). Any other gospel is under the awesome curse and anathema of God [Galatians chapter 1, and note especially verse 6. What these false teachers had moved away from was “**the grace of God.**”] The true gospel is a message of good news about a great Saviour who saves people in only one way: **BY HIS GRACE!! FREELY BY HIS GRACE!! ONLY BY HIS GRACE!! Any so-called gospel message which mingles or mixes works in any way, shape or form is a false gospel and God’s curse is upon it.** Notice Galatians 2:16 where **THREE TIMES IN ONE VERSE** we read “not by works”!

The Relationship Between SALVATION and THOSE WORKS THAT PLEASE GOD

Good works are the RESULT of salvation. We are not saved by good works but we are saved “unto good works.” “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Likewise in Titus 3:8, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.” Good works are not something that a person must do in order to be saved. Good works are something that a saved person does

because he is saved and because God is working in and through Him (Phil. 2:13).

The danger comes when we take what ought to be the RESULT of salvation and make it the REQUIREMENT for salvation. Never put the cart before the horse! Good works should always follow salvation but good works are not the requirement or the means of salvation.

The Relationship Between GOD’S GRACE and ANTINOMIANISM

There are two great errors, relating to the grace of God, that have plagued the church throughout the centuries. The first of these is the error of “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness [absence of restraint, uncontrolled lust, unbridled lust]—see Jude 4. This error expresses itself in this way, “Because I am saved by grace apart from any works at all, I can live any way I please.” This error has been labeled **antinomianism** [against law] or lawlessness. It is using the grace of God as an excuse for lawlessness and every kind of ungodly type of living.²

The Bible gives a strong answer to this error: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1-2). “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

The Relationship Between GOD’S GRACE and LEGALISM

The second great error, relating to the grace of God, is **legalism**. Legalism is adding some kind of work as a requirement for salvation. One example of this is found in Acts 15:1—“And certain men which

²Is antinomianism a problem in the evangelical/fundamental church today? See our booklet, *The Teaching of Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow and the GES* (\$2.00).

came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” Here we have circumcision added as a requirement for salvation [God’s grace + circumcision = salvation]. Peter answered this error in no uncertain terms: “And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should **hear the word of the gospel, and believe . . .** But we believe that **through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved**, even as they” (Acts 15:7,11). The Gentiles did not need to be circumcised in order to be saved. **ALL THEY NEEDED TO BE SAVED WAS THE GRACE OF GOD! All they needed to be saved was faith in Jesus Christ, God’s only Saviour!**

The Relationship Between GOD’S GRACE and LORDSHIP LEGALISM

This brings us to a teaching of our day, common in Reformed circles, popularly known as LORDSHIP SALVATION. Essentially Lordship salvation teaches that simple faith in Jesus Christ is not enough for salvation. Something else is needed. A solid commitment to Christ as Lord is needed. A person needs to surrender to the Lordship of Christ. A willingness to obey Christ’s commands is necessary. Also the sinner must fulfill the demands of discipleship or be willing to fulfill them. This includes loving Christ supremely, forsaking possessions, etc. (see Luke 14:25-33).

What do Lordship teachers do with Acts 16:30-31? [“And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”] This verse teaches that the sinner must do the believing and that God must do the saving. It teaches that faith and faith alone is necessary for salvation. It does not say, “Believe and surrender to Christ’s Lordship and fulfill the terms of discipleship and thou shalt be saved.” It simply says, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.**”

What does it mean to believe? The hymn-writer has explained it in very simple terms, “Tis so sweet to **trust in Jesus**, just to take Him at His Word, just to rest upon His promise, just to know **THUS SAITH**

THE LORD!” Those who teach Lordship salvation are forced to redefine saving faith. It means more than just simple, childlike faith in Jesus Christ. They might say something like this: “We believe in Acts 16:31 just as much as you do, but you need to understand what the word ‘**believe**’ really means. ‘Believe’ means more than just believe. Saving faith involves much more.”

What does it mean to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Lordship salvation teachers would say that it involves the following:

It means surrendering to His Lordship.

It means turning from sin.

It means submitting to His authority and to His Word.

It means obeying His commands, or at least having a willingness to obey.

It means fully accepting all the terms of discipleship.

Consider this last statement. Does saving faith really involve accepting all the terms of discipleship? Does saving faith really include such requirements as loving Christ supremely, forsaking all that one has, denying self, etc. (Luke 14:25-33, etc.)? A saved person should do all of these things, but he does not do these things *in order to be saved*. HE IS SAVED BECAUSE HE THROWS HIMSELF UPON THE MERCY OF A LOVING SAVIOUR WHO DIED FOR HIM. One reason why he needs to be saved is because he does not love Christ supremely. He is guilty of breaking the greatest commandment!

It is not our COMMITMENT that saves us, it is our CHRIST who saves us! It is not our SURRENDER that saves us, it is our SAVIOUR who does! It is not **what I do for God**; it’s **what God has done for me**.

Avoid the dangerous error of taking what should be the RESULT of salvation and making it the REQUIREMENT of salvation:

It is **because I am saved** that I surrender to His Lordship (Rom. 12:1-2).

It is **because I am saved** that I turn from sin and begin to learn what it means to live unto righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24).

It is **because I am saved** that I follow Him in willing obedience (1 John 2:3-5).

It is **because I am saved** that I agree to the terms of discipleship and begin to learn all that discipleship involves (Luke chapter 14).

It is **because I am saved** that I submit to His authority over every area of my life (Rom. 6:13).

I do these things **because I am saved by the grace of God**, not in order to be saved. Do not turn the results into requirements! Don't turn the grace of God into legalism [adding unbiblical requirements to the gospel message]. Don't confuse saving faith with that which saving faith ought to produce. Don't confuse repentance with the fruits of repentance. Behavior and fruit are the evidences of saving faith but they are not the essence of saving faith. Don't confuse the fruit with the root. Before you can "come after" Christ in discipleship (Luke 9:23; Matt. 11:29-30), you must "come unto" Christ for salvation (Matthew 11:28). Discipleship is not a requirement for salvation; discipleship is the obligation of every saved person. Salvation involves Christ loving me (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:20); discipleship involves me loving Christ (Matthew 10:37). Because we are justified freely by His grace we measure up to the full demands of God's righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Because we are frail we often fail to measure up to the full demands of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33). The requirements of discipleship are many; the requirement for salvation is simple faith and trust in the Saviour.³

Lordship Salvation Some Key Questions and Answers

What is the meaning of the term "Lord"?

The New Testament word for "Lord" is the Greek term "kurios"

³See our paper showing the difference between **Salvation and Discipleship** (5¢).

(κύριος). It comes from a related word "kuros" which means "power, might, supreme power and authority." Thus "kurios" means the Mighty One, the Supreme One, the One who has authority over me, the One who has control over me, the Sovereign One.

Thus the term means "Lord, Master, Sovereign." It sometimes carries with it the idea of ownership because the person who has control over something and who is sovereign over something is normally the **owner** of that thing. See Luke 19:33 (the **owners** of the colt) and Matthew 20:8 (the **owner** of the vineyard). The Lord Jesus is not only our Master but He is also our **Owner** because we are "bought with a price" and purchased with His blood (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

How is the term "Lord" used in the New Testament?

It is used in connection with certain human relationships:

- 1) It is used of a master or **slave owner** who is lord over his slaves (Col. 3:22).
- 2) It is used of an emperor or **king** who is lord over his subjects.
 - a) It was used of the Roman emperor (Acts 25:26).
 - b) It was used of Pilate the governor (Matt. 27:63).
 - c) Compare Revelation 17:14—"Lord of Lords"
- 3) It is used of a **husband** who is lord over his wife (1 Peter 3:6—"even as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him lord").
- 4) It is used of an **employer** (boss) who is lord over his steward or employee (Luke 16:3,5).
- 5) It is used of a **father** who is lord over his son (Matthew 21:30 where "sir"=kurios).

Note: In all of these above mentioned relationships, the "lord" is in a position of authority and therefore submission and obedience are required on the part of the slave, citizen, wife, employee, son, etc.

- 6) In the overwhelming number of instances, the word "kurios" is used of Jesus Christ our sovereign Master and Lord. One example is found in John 20:28 (the utterance of Thomas): "My **Lord** and my God." The meaning of the term: "My Lord, my

Powerful Master, My Sovereign Ruler, My Rightful Owner, My Supreme Authority, etc.”

What are the Old Testament terms for “Lord”?

There are two Old Testament terms for “Lord.”

- 1) The Hebrew term “**Adonai**” rendered in the KJV by “Lord” is very similar in meaning to the Greek term “kurios.” It means “Lord, Master, Sovereign One, Owner, Ruler.” Sarah used it in reference to her husband (Gen. 18:12; compare 1 Pet. 3:6). Abraham’s servant repeatedly called his master “lord” in Genesis 24. The pharaoh of Egypt was called by this title (Gen. 40:1), as well as Joseph (Gen. 42:10). Ruth used it of Boaz before they were married (Ruth 2:13). The term is translated “owner” in 1 Kings 16:24.
- 2) The Hebrew term “**Jehovah**” (rendered in the KJV by “LORD” or “GOD”) is considered by the Jews to be the most sacred Name for DEITY. It is derived from the verb “I AM!” (compare Exodus 3:14). It is used exclusively of the one true God.

Note: When these two terms are brought into the New Testament they are both translated by the Greek word “kurios” (Lord). For example, in Psalm 110:1 the Hebrew text says, “JEHOVAH said unto my ADONAI...” but the New Testament uses “kurios” as a translation for both of these Hebrew words: “The Lord (kurios) said unto my Lord (kurios)”—see Matthew 22:44.

How is Jesus addressed in the New Testament?

One of the first things Paul said as a saved man was this: “**Lord**, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). Paul knew that Jesus was Lord. He also knew that because He was Lord he had an obligation. Throughout Paul’s epistles he addresses Jesus as “Lord.” Some examples are found in 1 Corinthians 1:2,3,7,9 (“our Lord Jesus Christ” etc.). When writing to the Corinthians, who had problems with

carnality, Paul made it very clear that Jesus Christ was Lord.

James and Jude were half-brothers of Jesus, sons of Mary and Joseph, and yet they addressed Jesus as their **Lord** and themselves as His **slaves** (see James 1:1; Jude 1,4,17,21). Their human relationship to Him was not the issue. Peter stressed Christ’s Lordship (see 2 Peter 1:2,8, 11,14,16) as did John (see 2 John 3 and Revelation 22:20-21).

A significant passage in this regard is 1 Corinthians 12:3—“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” The unsaved can say, “Lord, Lord...” (Matthew 7:22-23) but only a true believer can really say “Lord” with sincerity and depth of meaning.

I have found that mature believers whose minds are immersed in God’s Word will generally not refer to the Saviour as “Jesus.” They will normally and naturally refer to Him as “the Lord,” “the Lord Jesus Christ,” “the Lord Jesus.” This follows the pattern found in the epistles.

Regarding the Lordship salvation issue, how important is it to find the proper Biblical balance?

There are extreme and erroneous positions in either direction, reminding us of an old saying, “The pendulum swings, ridiculous extreme, bypassing truth which lies somewhere between.” On the one extreme is the Lordship salvation position which teaches that submission, obedience, surrender, and the fulfillment of the conditions of discipleship are requirements for salvation. On the other extreme is the “free grace” position which teaches that it is possible for a true believer to follow a consistent pattern of disobedience and rebellion, even to the point of denying the faith, rejecting Christ and becoming a total apostate.⁴ The correct Biblical teaching lies somewhere between these two extreme positions.

⁴This is the position of Zane Hodges, Robert Wilkin, Joseph Dillow, The Grace Evangelical Society and others. See our booklet, “The Theology of Zane Hodges and Joseph Dillow and the GES” (\$2.00).

Can Christ be a person's Saviour but not be a person's Lord?

If Christ is your Saviour, then He is also your Lord because truly that is who He is!⁵ He cannot be other than who He is. We must not divorce His Lordship from His Saviourhood. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord**" (Luke 2:11). Who is this Saviour? He is Christ the Lord! You cannot say, "He is my Saviour but He is not my Lord." You may not surrender to His Lordship and submit to his authority as you should, but this does not change the fact that He is Lord.

When a person is saved, who is the Person that he trusts? "And they said, Believe on **the Lord** Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Someone might say: "I'll trust Him as Saviour and then some time later I'll trust Him as Lord and submit to Him." This is incorrect. When you were saved you put your trust in a Person and this Person is the Lord!

When a person is saved, WHOM does he receive? "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus **the Lord**, so walk ye in Him" (Col. 2:6). "I received Christ as my Saviour but not as my Lord." Perish the thought! You must not divide the Person of Christ. The One who is your Saviour is also your Lord. How can He be other than who He is? The believer may fail to respond to His Lordship as he should, but Christ is Lord nonetheless.

Can a person "make Christ Lord"?

No! You do not make Him Lord; He is Lord. He is exactly who He is. You cannot make Him Lord of your life. He is Lord of your life whether you acknowledge that fact or not. Because He is Lord, I need to acknowledge Him as such. Because He is Lord, I need to honor Him as Lord, bowing before His authority, trembling before His Word. Because He is Lord, I can present my body to Him a living sacrifice

⁵Christ is also Lord over all the unsaved and someday will be acknowledged as such (Phil. 2:9-11).

(Romans 12:1-2).

We certainly understand what people mean when they say, "I want to make Christ Lord of my life." They are indicating that they want to surrender to His Lordship and submit to His rightful authority. However, there is a better way to say this: "I must live my life consistently with the fact that Jesus Christ is my Lord. His Lordship demands my submission and obedience and glad surrender to His perfect will for my life."

When Christ is preached to the unsaved, should He be preached as Saviour only, or should He also be proclaimed as Lord?

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus **the Lord**; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5). "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, **both Lord** and Christ" (Acts 2:36). "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: **He is Lord of all**" (Acts 10:36). In preaching the gospel we must never misrepresent who He is. Christ is Lord!

What is the significance of Romans 10:9-10 in the Lordship salvation debate?

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth **the Lord Jesus**, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

This verse actually could be translated in this way: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord . . ." (same Greek construction as in Phil. 2:11). This verse is teaching that a true believer will confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Just as good works are *faith made visible* (James 2:14-26), so confessing Christ is *faith made audible*. Confessing Christ is not a condition of salvation but it is the natural result of salvation: "For whosoever shall believe on Him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. 10:11).

The true believer confesses Christ *as Lord*. Many who are opposed to Lordship salvation argue that what the person is confessing is Christ's deity, not His Lordship. They understand "Lord" in Romans 10:9 to be equivalent to "Jehovah" a Name exclusively used of the true God. Thus a saved person must recognize that Jesus is God, but not necessarily recognize or acknowledge His Lordship. This argument does not carry much weight for the following reason: If Jesus Christ is truly GOD, then He must be Lord also. If He is God—the supreme, all powerful Creator—then He must have absolute authority over all His creatures. That is, He must be Lord. If He is God, then He must be Lord also. The two titles go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. If He is Lord of all, He must be the Creator-God. If He is the Creator-God, then He must be Lord. It would be foolish for a person to say, "I acknowledge Him as Deity, as my Creator-God, but I reject Him as Lord."

Whether a believer submits to His Lordship and how faithfully he obeys His Lord is a separate question.

Can a true believer receive Him as Saviour but reject Him as Lord?

If we are honest and face reality we must admit that there are times when every true believer rebels against Christ's authority and is disobedient to His Word. Total submission to His Lordship requires total obedience to all His commands, and we all have fallen short of this. Consider the following two statements from professing believer A and from professing believer B:

Professing believer A: "I have received Christ as my Saviour but I refuse to submit to Him as Lord! I reject His authority over my life and I refuse to obey Him. I'm glad to have Him as my Saviour from hell, but He is not going to tell me what to do."

Professing believer B: "I want to obey my Lord, the One who died for me, but there are many times when I fail. My heart is deeply grieved when I fail to obey Him and I'm convicted and bothered and often miserable. I have dishonored my Lord and brought shame to His

Name."⁶

Professing believer A, by his words and attitude, does not give much evidence of having a real, personal, saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. *Professing believer B* seems to be a true possessor of Christ, because although he has sinned and rebelled against his Lord, he was bothered and broken about it. The Spirit of God who indwells a sinning believer is grieved, and He makes His grieved presence felt. As R.Gene Reynolds has written, "A person who is living sinfully, who *knows* he is living sinfully, who *enjoys* living in such a manner, who intends to *continue* that sinful way of living—that person does not have the Holy Spirit living within him. The very fact that he is 'comfortable' about his sin is proof of the Spirit's absence. His spiritual vital sign registers, 'no life.' "⁷

Does every true believer surrender to Christ's Lordship?

This question needs to be answered very carefully in light of the Scriptures. The answer to the question is both YES and NO.

1) **YES**, every true believer surrenders to Christ's Lordship.

The person who surrenders to Christ's Lordship is the person who bows before His authority and obeys His Word. The New Testament indicates that one of the characteristics of a true believer is that he obeys God's Word and keeps God's commands: "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4). The same was true of the original disciples. Jesus said of them, "They have kept My Word" (John 17:6). This was a remarkable statement for our Lord to make in view of the

⁶We are reminded of Peter who, after he sinned, "went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62) or of Lot whose righteous soul was vexed (2 Peter 2:7-8).

⁷R. Gene Reynolds, *Assurance* (Tyndale House), page 73.

obvious shortcomings of these men. Peter, for example, did not represent a surrendered, obedient believer when he denied his Lord three times. Nor was he being submissive in Acts 10:14 when he said, “Not so, Lord!” Nor was he surrendering in Matthew 16:22 when he rebuked the Lord and strongly contradicted His Word! If you were to take a snapshot of any of these isolated acts of failure you could say that Peter was a disobedient believer who did not surrender to Christ’s Lordship. But as you look at the overall picture of his life, as the Lord Jesus did, you would have to conclude that this was a man who kept Christ’s Word. As you look at the whole panorama of his life you would say that Peter, in spite of his shortcomings, was a man who surrendered to Christ’s Lordship.

2) **NO**, every true believer does not surrender to Christ’s Lordship.

We desire and want to please our Lord, but there are times when we fail to surrender as we should. If we are honest we would have to admit the following: *All believers have sinned and come short of perfect submission to Christ.* Every believer falls short of perfect surrender, perfect obedience, perfect submission, perfect compliance with all the demands of discipleship. Thank God we have an Advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus the Righteous One (1 John 2:1-2)!

Does a new believer understand the full implications of Christ’s Lordship?

No, the new believer is just beginning to learn what Christ’s Lordship means and the obligations that accompany it. The newborn babe in Christ knows very little about surrender and submission. He knows his sins have been forgiven and that he has received Christ and that he possesses eternal life. He is full of thanksgiving for his so-great salvation and he desires to please the One who died for him. But how Christ’s Lordship will affect his marriage, his family, his job, his finances, his church, the way in which he takes care of his body, etc.—all these things he will need to learn in time.

Similarly, a new believer does not understand the full implications of Christ’s saving grace all at once. He is learning what it means to be

saved by grace and this learning process takes a lifetime. John 3:16 should mean more to a believer now than it did a year ago and it should mean more to him a year from now than it does today. So it is with discipleship and Lordship. There is a learning process involved. The fact of Christ’s Lordship should be more precious to me now than it was last year. As I grow in Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), I will gradually come to a better understanding of what it means to submit to Christ as my Lord.

Is Lordship Salvation a misnomer?

It would be more accurate to speak of “Lordship Sanctification.” Surrendering to Christ’s Lordship is an essential requirement for sanctification (growth in Christ), not for salvation.⁸ Our message to the unsaved is to BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, not to surrender to the full demands of discipleship. *Saints* are the ones who need to *surrender*. Sinners need to believe; saints need to surrender.

Can unsaved people surrender to Christ’s Lordship?

Absolutely not. It’s impossible. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8). This illustrates the folly of making submission a requirement of salvation. Salvation is needed in order for a person to submit and obey! If salvation is a requirement for submission, then how can submission be a requirement for salvation? Submission to Christ and all His commands is not something a sinner does in order to be saved. The person is responsible to live a life of surrender and obedience once he is saved, but not beforehand. Do not put the cart before the horse.

Can a believer in Christ be carnal?

Some Reformed theologians and Lordship salvation advocates insist

⁸Sanctification as used here refers to progressive sanctification (as in 1 Thess. 4:3; John 17:17), not positional sanctification (as in 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11).

that there is no such thing as a carnal believer, but the Scriptures are very clear to the contrary: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, **but as unto carnal**, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. **For ye are yet carnal**: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; **are ye not carnal?**” (1 Cor. 3:1-4). A believer is carnal when he walks in the flesh and not in the Spirit (compare Gal. 5:16).

Although the Corinthians were carnal, we must remember that according to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 their lives were not dominated by the sins of the flesh in the same way as when they were unsaved. Paul said, “such *were* some of you.” He did not say, “such *are* some of you.”⁹ They were new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). However, there were times when they did not walk or act like new creatures at all. Indeed, they sometimes walked and lived like mere (unregenerate) men (see 1 Cor. 3:3).

Is it possible to misidentify an unsaved person by using the label of a carnal Christian?

Some use carnality as an excuse to cover up an unregenerate heart. There is a heaven and hell difference between a carnal Christian who is grieving and quenching the Spirit (“saved so as by fire”) and an unsaved person who is walking after the flesh. It is not always easy to tell them apart. Sometimes those we presume to be saved may not be saved at all. One man once made this comment: “*I was once a member of a young people’s gospel team. We were all saved, and we had some success in preaching the gospel. But one member of the team got into worldly company. He married a very worldly girl. He denied his Christian profession of faith, and he died a drunkard. Now you see, he was a Christian; he went to heaven; but he was a carnal Christian and he will not receive the reward of a spiritual Christian.*” This man most

⁹See our detailed study of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (10¢).

probably made the wrong assumption when he said, “We were all saved.” Some who think they are saved so as by fire will actually be lost so as by the lake of fire! Some who think they are saved by the skin of their teeth will actually be lost by weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Can a true believer continue in sin?

This is another question that must be answered very carefully. The correct answer is both YES and NO.

YES, a true believer can continue in sin.

Consider Peter. He denied his Lord. Did he do it just once? No, he continued in this sin and did it a second time. Did he do it just twice? No, he continued in his denial of Christ and did it a third time. Peter continued in sin for a while, but, of course, later he was “converted” (changed his direction—Luke 22:32) and on the Day of Pentecost he boldly confessed Christ before thousands.

Consider David. He sinned grievously with Bathsheba and committed adultery and even made sure that her husband was killed in battle. How long was it before David took care of this sin? We are amazed to learn that the time between David’s sin and his confession of that sin was close to a year (compare 2 Samuel 11:27 with 12:15). He continued, apparently in an unrepentant state, for many months.

Consider yourself. Are there areas in your life where you have continued in sin and been in bondage to some besetting and reoccurring sin?

NO, a true believer will not continue in sin.

John teaches us this in 1 John 3:6-10 and 1 John 5:18. These verses teach that the true believer, the one born of God, “sinneth not” (does not keep on sinning) and does not “commit sin” (does not keep on practicing sin). There are at least three reasons why the true believer

does not keep on practicing sin:

- 1) The **CONVICTION** of God the Holy Spirit who makes the true child of God very uncomfortable in his sin (compare Eph. 4:30).
- 2) **CONFESSION** of sin on the part of the believer (1 John 1:9). This breaks the pattern of sin.
- 3) The **CHASTENING** hand of the Father (1 Cor. 11:31-32; Heb. 12:5-11).

Also of vital importance is the intercessory work of the Son of God (Luke 22:32; John chapter 17; etc.) and the keeping power of God (1 Peter 1:5; Jude 1,24).

Can a true believer live, at least for some time, as an unsaved person?

A believer walking in the flesh and fulfilling the lusts thereof is indistinguishable from an unsaved person who is walking after the flesh (which is the only way he can walk). “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and **walk as men?**” (1 Cor. 3:3). Paul said that the carnal Corinthians were walking as mere ordinary men. What an insult! What a contradiction! How can a child of God walk like a child of Adam? How can a child of the light walk as a child of darkness? But it does happen far more than we would want to think. The Corinthian church was not the only church that has had major problems with carnality. Believers today commonly grieve and quench the Holy Spirit of God as well.

Even John MacArthur acknowledges the problem: “An unproductive Christian is of no more use to God than an unbeliever . . . A believer can be just as barren and fruitless as an unbeliever. A barren Christian is completely indistinguishable from an apostate, an evildoer, or a superficial, false Christian who is of no use to God” (*Adding to Your Faith*, pages 48-49). Certainly one who is surrendering to Christ’s Lordship could not be described in this way.

Can the degree of fruitfulness vary greatly among believers?

Yes. This is taught in Matthew 13:23—“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:23). There is a great difference between an hundredfold and thirtyfold. The True Vine desires “more fruit” (John 15:2) and “much fruit” (John 15:8) but some believers, because of their own failure to “abide in Him” (1 John 2:28), are much less fruitful than others. Those believers fully committed to the Lordship of Christ understand that abiding in Christ is essential.

Notice that Matthew 13:23 does *not* say, “. . . some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty and **some zero.**” Ryrie explains it this way, “Every Christian will bear spiritual fruit. Somewhere, sometime, somehow. Otherwise that person is not a believer. Every born-again individual will be fruitful. Not to be fruitful is to be faithless, without faith, and therefore without salvation . . . Every Christian will bear fruit; otherwise he or she is not a true believer” (*So Great Salvation*, pages 45-46). We must therefore avoid two extreme teachings: the first which says that a true believer can be totally fruitless (the “free grace” position) and the second which says that a true believer will necessarily and consistently bear much fruit (the Reformed, Lordship position).

Does the Bible give us specific examples of saved persons who did not surrender to God’s Lordship over their lives but rather rebelled against God’s Word and God’s authority?

The Bible gives us vivid, unforgettable and tragic examples of **LORDSHIP FAILURES**. By this we mean true believers who failed to submit to their Lord and their God, resulting in great sin and failure; yet these people were truly saved. Here are several examples:

Consider the example of a man who married pagan wives and whose heart was turned away from the Lord. His heart was turned after other gods. His heart was not perfect with the LORD. He did evil in the sight

of the Lord. He did not fully follow the LORD. He built high places for false gods, including the god Molech. The Lord was angry with this man. His heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel. He kept not that which the Lord commanded [compare 1 Kings 11]. Here was a sad example of a Lordship failure.

“Lordship Salvation” advocates might say: “How could such a man possibly be saved? His actions and lack of submission point to an unregenerate heart. There is no way that he could be a true believer.” What does God say about this man? What is God’s evaluation of this man? “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, **who was beloved of his God**, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin” (Nehemiah 13:26). Solomon was God’s beloved one! He was a saved man, and yet there was a time in his life when he rebelled wickedly against His Lord.¹⁰

There was once a king who refused to trust God in a time of war. Instead he relied upon the king of Syria and did not rely on the Lord. He did foolishly in God’s sight. When God rebuked him for this through the mouth of His prophet, the king was angry with the prophet, threw him into a house of stocks, tortured him, oppressed and crushed anyone who supported this prophet and went into a furious rage over the whole matter. Later he was diseased in his feet and he sought not the Lord but the physicians. The last thing we read about this man is that “he sought not the LORD.” See 2 Chronicles 16. Lordship salvation people might say something like this: “How could this man have been saved? If he were really saved he would have lived a faithful and holy life unto the very end.” Here is what God says about this man: “**And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD**, as did David his father . . . But the high places were not removed: **nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the LORD all his days**” (1 Kings 15:11,14).

¹⁰Thankfully Solomon repented at the end of his life and wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. The book of Ecclesiastes was to Solomon what Psalm 51 was to David—his document of repentance.

“You can’t be saved and live in a cesspool of sin!” What about Lot, “that righteous man”?

“You can’t be saved and be a conniving scoundrel!” What about Jacob, that patriarch?

“You can’t be saved and be a womanizer!” What about Samson, the hero mentioned in Hebrews 11?

“You can’t be saved and get drunk!” What about Noah who was seen as righteous in his generation?

“You can’t be saved and commit such overt sins as adultery and murder?” What about David?

“You can’t lead God’s people into sin by making a golden calf. This is something a saved person does not do. No golden calf maker will inherit the kingdom.” What about Aaron, chosen by God to be the first high priest?

“You can’t be saved and be overcome with doubt!” What about Thomas, the apostle?

“You can’t be saved and then verbally and publicly contradict what God says and then later deny the Lord repeatedly!” What about Peter? As has already been noted, in Matthew 16:21-22 Peter contradicted the word of His Lord and rebuked Him! This was an obvious Lordship failure. Then again in Acts 10:14 Peter made a very contradictory statement: “Not so, Lord.” Those truly submitting to His Lordship should say, “Yes, Lord, I will do as You say.” Peter was a saved man in spite of his Lordship failures.

True believers can fail, they can be carnal, they can be disobedient, they can walk in the flesh, they can walk as men, they can cause the Word of God to be blasphemed and they can bring shame to the Name of their Lord.

The Apostle Paul himself greatly feared failure and knew it was

possible, even for himself: “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, **I myself should be a castaway**” (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul knew that his progress in sanctification could be so hindered that he could actually be disapproved and lose his crown. He knew that he himself could end up a LORDSHIP FAILURE, a LORDSHIP CASUALTY. He feared this greatly. May we fear the same!

Is there a danger in not making the proper Biblical distinctions between justification and sanctification?

One of the problems of the Lordship Salvation position is that it sometimes fails to keep justification distinct from sanctification. The commands that pertain to justification are different and distinct from the commands that pertain to sanctification. For example, consider the command in Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” This command pertains to sanctification, not to justification.

The commands which involve discipleship pertain to sanctification and not justification. These would include such things as “Deny self,” “Forsake possessions,” “Hate father, mother, son, daughter,” “Take up thy cross,” “Lose your life for Christ’s sake” etc. Confusion results when we make the conditions of discipleship the same as the conditions for justification. WHAT MUST A PERSON DO TO BE SAVED (JUSTIFIED)? WHAT MUST A PERSON DO TO BE A DISCIPLE? Lordship Salvation advocates give the same answer to both of the questions.¹¹ The Bible gives distinct answers to these questions.

What is the relationship between saving faith and sanctification or holy living?

There are two extreme teachings which must be avoided because the

truth lies somewhere between:

1) The Extreme Teaching of the “Free Grace” Movement

This group teaches that *there is no relationship between saving faith and sanctification*. This view, while condemning an unholy life style, would say that it is possible for a true believer to consistently persist in sin and live a wicked life style, even to the point of denying Christ, rejecting the truths of the gospel, and totally abandoning the faith.

A proper understanding of **THE NEW NATURE** helps us to reject this extreme teaching. Christ lives in me (Gal. 2:20). God works in me (Phil. 2:13). God convicts me of sin. God chastens me in love and will not allow me to go on in sin, even as a responsible father will not allow his child to persist in wrong doing. Because I have a new nature and because Christ lives in me, this LIFE is going to show itself somehow and it is going to be evidenced in some way (see 1 John 2:3-4; 3:10,14; etc.). Our Lord said, “Every good tree brings forth good fruit” (Matthew 7:17).

2) The Extreme Teaching of the “Lordship Salvation” Movement

This group teaches that *there is an automatic relationship between saving faith and sanctification*. This view says that true faith automatically results in an absolutely and totally transformed life. John MacArthur has said it this way, “Listen! No one who is saved will fail to repent, will fail to submit or fail to obey . . . True faith results in an absolutely and totally transformed life.” “Saving faith is a placing of oneself totally in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹² If a person’s life does not measure up to the kind of absolute and total transformation that Lordship advocates expect, then they are quick to call into question the person’s salvation. They say that he never truly believed to the saving of his soul, because if he had done this, then a sanctified, holy life would have automatically resulted.

¹¹ Lordship salvation advocates teach that the terms of discipleship are the same as the terms of salvation. To them they are the same.

¹² The first quote is transcribed from John MacArthur’s audio cassette tape GC 90-21 on Lordship Salvation. The second quote is from John MacArthur’s book, *Romans 1-8*, page 205.

A proper understanding of **THE OLD NATURE** helps us to reject this extreme teaching.¹³ Because of the fact of the old nature and the reality of indwelling sin, there is the possibility of carnality, of walking in the flesh, of not abiding in Christ, of disobeying the Lord, etc. There exist the sad possibilities of such “Lordship failures” which have been already discussed. The ten examples of “Lordship failure” that were cited all have their root cause traceable to the old sinful nature that saved individuals still possess. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:18,24).

What is God’s requirement for salvation? What must a sinner do to be saved?

Manfred Kober has pointed to the heart of the issue: “At stake is the *essence of the evangel*. The basic question relates to the *sine qua non* of saving faith. What does an individual have to believe or do to be genuinely saved? Is faith the only requirement for salvation?

Correct View: Grace + Faith = Salvation + Works
Incorrect View: Grace + Faith + Works = Salvation”¹⁴

The “works” mentioned in the above formula can include such things as obedience to Christ’s commands, submission to His authority, fulfillment of the demands of discipleship, etc.

God’s message of good news to sinners is very simple and clear: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). The message to sinners **is not**: Surrender to His Lordship! Obey His commands! Love God supremely! Forsake all possessions! Accept all the terms of discipleship! Submit to God’s authority over

¹³John MacArthur teaches that a true believer does not possess two natures. Rather he possesses only one nature, the new nature in Christ. See our lengthy analysis of this in *The Teachings of John MacArthur* (\$6.00).

¹⁴Manfred Kober, *Lordship Salvation*, published by Faith Baptist Bible College and Seminary, Ankeny, Iowa.

every area of your life!

The false cults consistently give the wrong answer when asked, “What must a person do to be saved?” For example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses say, “By loving obedience to Him, you will put yourself in the way that leads to eternal life” (*The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*, p.26). Man’s obedience has never saved one soul. By nature we are “children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). By nature we were not subject to the law of God, neither could we be (Rom. 8:7). Salvation is not based upon what man does for God; it is based on what God has done for man.¹⁵

Should we change the terms of salvation in order to promote holy living?

Dr. Ernest Pickering has written the following: “One of the chief objections to the notion of ‘Lordship salvation’ is that it adds to the gospel of grace. It requires something of the sinner which the Scriptures do not require. The message of salvation by grace proclaims to sinners that they may receive eternal life by faith alone whereas the message of “Lordship salvation” tells sinners they must be willing to give up whatever is in their life that is displeasing to God. At the point of gospel presentation they do not know what things those are, nor does the personal worker seeking to point them to Jesus know. There is a vast and significant difference between believing on Christ for salvation and learning from Him as our Lord....None of us are happy with shoddy, fleshly, and disobedient Christians. But the remedy for this condition is not found in changing the terms of the gospel. Well over 100 times in the New Testament, we are told that salvation is by faith or through believing. It is a very serious matter to add an ingredient to the gospel of salvation which is not found in the New Testament....Our task is to keep preaching the plain, simple gospel of free grace. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce in true believers those qualities of righteousness which we all devoutly long to see.”¹⁶

¹⁵See our tract, *Do or Done?* by C.H.M.

¹⁶*Lordship Salvation*, by Dr. Ernest Pickering, published by Baptist World Mission, P.O. Box 1463, Decatur, AL 35602.

What is the distinction between a requirement for salvation and a result of salvation?

Dr. Renald Showers has helped to clarify this: "On the one hand there is a false 'easy-believism' which asserts that mere mental assent to certain truths saves a person. On the other hand, in order to correct this error, some have made additions to the Gospel and the Biblical requirements for salvation. There is a clear distinction between a requirement for salvation and a result of salvation. The two should not be confused with each other. A willingness and desire for Christ to rule over one's life are prompted by the new spiritual life imparted by the Holy Spirit when He regenerates the believer at salvation. The unsaved do not and cannot submit to divine rule (Romans 8:7). Just as a tree cannot have apples unless it already has the nature of an apple tree, so a person cannot have a willingness and desire to submit to Christ's rule unless he already possesses the new nature received by regeneration at salvation (2 Pet. 1:3-4). Thus, even the willingness and desire to submit to Christ's rule are the result of, and not a requirement for, salvation."¹⁷

What is saving faith?

Saving faith is simply resting all your weight on the Lord Jesus Christ:

Resting all your weight on who He is (*His Worth, His Person*).

Resting all your weight on what He has done (*His Work*).

Resting all your weight on what He has said (*His Word*).

Saving faith is not working, but it is resting on the work of Another. It is resting on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling!*

I do not work my soul to save,
That my Lord hath done.
But I would work like any slave
For love of God's dear Son!

Conclusion

My commitment to Jesus Christ does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE. My surrender to His Lordship does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE. My obedience to His Word does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE. My love for the Saviour does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE. My ability to fulfill all the demands of discipleship does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE. My behavior and conduct does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE.

God's saving grace is to be found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ: "He that **hath** the Son hath life; and he that **hath** not the Son of God **hath** not life" (1 John 5:12).

Have you been justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Is your hope based upon what you have done or is your hope based upon Jesus' blood and righteousness? "I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but WHOLLY LEAN ON JESUS' NAME!" May we be standing fully on Christ the solid Rock, not upon the sinking sand of our own fragile commitment.

George Zeller
(Revised 11/99, 5/08, 6/12)

¹⁷The above quotation is by Dr. Renald Showers, *The Trouble With Lordship Salvation*, Word of Life 1990 Annual.

Appendix 1

Lordship Salvation Requirements

What do Lordship Salvation advocates actually require of the sinner? What do they say a person must do to be saved? John MacArthur is recognized as a leading proponent of Lordship Salvation. If you search through John MacArthur's three books on Lordship Salvation [*The Gospel According to Jesus* (abbreviated GATJ), *Faith Works* (abbreviated FW) and *Hard to Believe* (abbreviated HTB)] you will find numerous statements that indicate different salvation requirements. Consider the following:

Lordship Salvation Requirements

A person must have "a transforming commitment to the living Christ" (GATJ, p. ix, written by J. I. Packer).

"Follow Him in submissive obedience" (GATJ, p. 21).

Deny self, take up a cross, forsake all and follow Christ (GATJ, p. 30).

Repent, surrender and have an eagerness to obey (GATJ, p. 31).

Obey Christ (GATJ, p. 45).

Yield one's life to the Lordship of Christ (GATJ, p. 67).

Be willing to forsake everything (GATJ, p. 78).

Commit yourself to obedience (GATJ, p. 79)

Make Christ the highest authority in your life (GATJ, pp. 86-87).

Be willing to obey (GATJ, p. 88).

Repent and follow Jesus (GATJ, p. 106).

Turn from sin (GATJ, p. 112).

Forsake oneself for Christ's sake (GATJ, p. 135).

Be willing to sacrifice everything to acquire the kingdom (GATJ, p. 138—parables of hid treasure and pearl).

Give up all for the kingdom (GATJ, p. 138).

Totally abandon self-will (GATJ, p. 140).

Exchange all that you are for all that Christ is (GATJ, p. 140).

Make a full exchange of self for the Savior ("absolute surrender") - (GATJ, p. 141).

Turn from sin, abandon self and intend to obey God (GATJ, p. 161).

Repudiate the old life (GATJ, p. 162).

Turn from evil and intend to serve God (GATJ, p. 163).

Surrender to Christ and choose to obey Him (GATJ, p. 170).

Deny self and follow Christ (GATJ, p. 196).

Love Christ more than your own family members, be unquestionably loyal to Him even above your families (GATJ, pages 200-201).

Obey Christ's divine authority (GATJ, p. 204).

MacArthur teaches that James 4:7-10 is “perhaps the most comprehensive invitation to salvation in the epistles” (GATJ, p. 218). Based on this statement we must add the following requirements:

Submit yourself to God
Resist the devil.
Draw nigh to God.
Cleanse your hands.
Purify your hearts.
Be afflicted and mourn.
Humble yourselves.

Turn to Christ in full self-surrender (FW, p. 49).

Turn from your sins (FW, p. 74).

Surrender heart, mind and will to Christ (FW, p. 194).

Deny self (HTB, pages 2, 6).

Take up your cross daily (HTB, p. 6)

Follow Christ (HTB, p. 6).

Refuse to associate any longer with the person you are (HTB, p. 7).

The requirement for eternal life is to be willing to give up all your earthly possessions if the Lord should ask this (HTB, p. 9).

Be willing to give up as much as it takes (HTB, p. 11).

“If you want to become a Christian, slay yourself! Refuse to associate any long with yourself, reject all the things your self longs and wants and hopes for. Be willing to die for the sake of Christ.” (HTB, pages 11-12)

Totally and absolutely deny self (HTB, pages 14-15).

Be willing to hate your father and mother (HTB, p. 15)

Be willing to dump all your earthly goods (possessions)–Luke 14:33 (HTB, p. 15).

“The complete surrender of all possessions is the essence of salvation” (HTB, p. 16).

Give yourself totally to Him which involves self-denial, cross bearing and following Him in obedience (HTB, p. 67).

Deny yourself and give Him your life (HTB, p. 69).

Die to yourself (HTB, p. 70).

You must obey the Sermon on the Mount (HTB, p. 81).

Leave all your possessions behind (HTB, p. 85).

“Salvation isn’t the result of an intellectual exercise. It comes from a life lived in obedience and service to Christ as revealed in the Scriptures” (HTB, p. 93).

I have learned that this last quotation (page 93 in *Hard to Believe*) was not written by MacArthur, but erroneously made its way into the text by way of an editor. I’ve been told that subsequent editions of the book have corrected this. However, I do not find this quote to be out of harmony with MacArthur’s Lordship position. If self denial, full surrender, loving Christ more than anyone else, forsaking all possessions are all requirements of salvation, then why can’t obedience be added as well?

Affirm your commitment to the lordship of Christ to the point where you are willing to forsake everything (HTB, pages 132-133).

“You can’t receive His salvation if your family means more to you than He does” (HTB, p. 134).

Give up your life and embrace His (HTB, p. 178).

On the back flyleaf of the book HTB, it says, "The hard truth about Christianity is that the cost is high, but the rewards are priceless: abundant and eternal life that comes only from faithfully following Christ (emphasis mine)."

Observations

1. These Lordship salvation requirements all focus upon **what the sinner must do**. When it comes to salvation by grace, the true focus should be upon the finished work of Christ and what He has done. See our study entitled *Do or Done?* Salvation is based on God’s mercy, and it is not based on “works of righteousness which we have done” (Titus 3:5). “**But to him that worketh not**, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5). See also Ephesians 2:8-9. It is not our sacrifice that saves us, it is the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:18). MacArthur says, “We contribute nothing to our salvation” (HTB, p. 188), but if you read the list of requirements above, it seems that man does contribute a great deal.
2. As you consider this list of Lordship requirements, it is obvious that MacArthur and others like him believe that the terms of discipleship are the same as requirements for

salvation. To them “What must I do to be saved?” and “What must I do to be a disciple?” are identical questions. See our paper, *A Contrast and Comparison Between Discipleship and Salvation*. The only requirement for salvation is faith in the Person, Work and Word of God’s only Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The requirements for discipleship are many and are essential for the believer’s sanctification. Lordship Sanctification is Biblical; Lordship Salvation is not.

3. One example of a discipleship requirement is loving Christ more than your own family members, and being unquestionably loyal to Him even above your own loved ones (GATJ, pages 200-201, HTB, p. 134). In other words, Christ should be the supreme object of my love. I should love Him more than family members, more than my own possessions, even more than my own life. This discipleship requirement is merely a re-statement of the greatest commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37). Thus, Lordship salvation men are essentially telling us that the greatest commandment is a requirement for salvation, and since the greatest commandment sums up the 10 Commandments (Matt. 22:40), then this means that salvation is obtained by keeping the Law. And yet we know that none of us have kept the law perfectly, and none of us have loved God supremely. The greatest commandment (along with the other laws which it summarizes) condemns every one of us to hell! If loving God supremely is a salvation requirement, then all of us are doomed! We have all failed to do this. How thankful I am that Christ Jesus came into the world to save guilty lawbreakers! See 1 Timothy 1:15.
4. Lordship men actually soften the requirements of discipleship, something which our Lord never did. In many of MacArthur’s requirements we read phrases like this: be willing to forsake everything, have an eagerness to obey, be

willing to sacrifice everything, be willing to hate your father and mother, etc. But the Lord said, “If you hate not father and mother....you cannot be my disciple.” He didn’t merely speak of a willingness to do it, but He spoke of actually doing it. “Whosoever he is of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). The Lord did not just speak of a willingness to forsake all possessions, but He spoke of actually doing it. So MacArthur is actually softening the requirements of discipleship. Believers do not measure up to the full demands of discipleship (even the Lord’s original twelve disciples lacked faith and full commitment on numerous occasions). The good news is that every believer completely measures up to the full demands of God’s righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). God has fully provided the righteousness which we could never attain to on our own.

5. On page 9 (HTB) MacArthur states that the requirement for eternal life is to be willing to give up all your earthly possessions if the Lord should ask this. This means that the requirement for eternal life varies for different individuals. For some individuals, the requirement for eternal life would include being willing to give up all earthly possessions if the Lord should ask this. But if the Lord has not required this of other individuals, then they are exempt from this salvation requirement. According to this teaching, the requirement for eternal life varies depending upon what the Lord has asked each person to do. If this teaching is correct, then we would conclude that there is not just one plan of salvation but there is a unique and special plan of salvation specially designed for each individual. This would make personal evangelism very challenging because we would never be sure just which plan of salvation is required for the person we are witnessing to.

6. Fulfilling all the Lordship requirements is complicated indeed. According to MacArthur, salvation is not easy (GATJ, p. 182) and it is very *Hard to Believe* (the title of his book). How would a person under Lordship teaching ever gain assurance of salvation? Could he be sure that he has loved the Lord supremely? Has he given up all his possessions if the Lord has required him to do so, and how does he really know whether the Lord wants him to do this? Has he measured up to all the demands of discipleship? Is his level of commitment sufficient to satisfy the Lord? Has he surrendered enough? Is he sure that he has surrendered all or are there some things he is holding back? Are there areas of his life where he has not denied self? Has he “turned from sin” in every area of his life or is he still harboring some sin somewhere? If he were to examine his life based on all the requirements listed in this paper, how would he measure up? Would this self-examination lead him to full assurance of salvation? Remember, the more we look at SELF the more discouraged we will be. How wonderful it is to rest on the all-sufficient, finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. May our only boast be in the crucified One (1 Cor. 1:29-31)! “Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling!”

“And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).