

## Lordship Salvation or Lordship Legalism?

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During the Spanish-American War, Clara Barton was overseeing the work of the Red Cross in Cuba. One day Colonel Theodore Roosevelt came to her, wanting to buy food for his sick and wounded Rough Riders. But she refused to sell him any. Roosevelt was perplexed. His men needed the help, and he was prepared to pay out of his own funds. When he asked someone why he could not buy the supplies, he was told, "Colonel, just ask for it!" A smile broke over Roosevelt's face. Now he understood--the provisions were not for sale. All he had to do was simply ask and they would be given freely.

So it is with salvation! It's freely given to the sinner who asks for it through a simple expression of faith (Rom. 10:13). "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). If the gift of justification is free, the way to get the gift is also free. You cannot have one without the other. The free gift of a person's justification before God is provided through the expression of God's free grace ("the gift by grace" – Rom. 5:15). Both the gift and the receiving of the gift are free. What you get (justification) and how you get it (grace) are free. Everything is free!

A gift is cheapened if it can be earned. Can you imagine a dad giving a gift to his child at Christmas and saying, "Son, I have this new bike for you. However, before you can have it, you must clean your room, take out the trash, and do the dishes." Of course, this would not be a gift since the very definition of a gift is something that is free. Salvation is a gift received through faith, not a reward for being willing to follow and obey Christ. However, Lordship Salvation takes away the free gift of redemptive salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ. It adds on requirements for salvation that a person must meet in order to be saved and become a faithful Christian.

As a result, the grace and freedom of this "so-great salvation" (Heb. 2:3) is undermined by also pushing the sinner to adhere to a program of discipleship, the promise to make Jesus lord over one's life, personal surrender, obedience, dying to self, and counting the cost of following Christ. But if a person must promise to do these things, perform these requirements, and personally meet the credentials of

discipleship in order to be saved, then salvation is no longer a free gift. It is actually a form of legalism, the way of human effort and earning one's salvation. So, Lordship Salvation is really Lordship Legalism in disguise. It undermines the truth that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ without any form of works that are disguised in the terms of discipleship or following Christ, yielding, obeying, counting the cost, dying to self, giving up sins, and making Jesus lord over one's life (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5).



The “free gift” teaching of the Bible regarding salvation (Rev. 21:6; 22:17; Rom. 3:24; 6:23) and the lordship view of following and obeying Christ cannot both be right! The expression “him that worketh not, but believeth on him” (Rom. 4:5) settles the matter once-and-for-all! There is *no legalism* in the free gift of salvation which demands *no price* on the part of a person who simply believes on Christ.

John MacArthur creates a paradoxical statement to support his lordship theory when he says, “salvation is a gift, yet it costs everything” (The Gospel According to Jesus, p. 31). How can a gift be free and yet cost the person everything? How can salvation be a free gift and yet cost the recipient an entire life of obedience, discipleship, good works, and following Christ to receive it?



Matthew 19:16 reveals the underlying premise of Lordship Salvation: “And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”

The problem with Lordship Salvation is that when you include surrender, discipleship, mastery/lordship, obedience, commitments, and promises as part of the sinner's response to Christ at the time of salvation you create a list of things a person must actually DO in order to be saved such as give up your sins (obedience), die to yourself, make Jesus lord of your life, take up your cross, surrender completely to Him, promise to follow Him, count the cost and sign up for discipleship, and allow Him to be your Master. Unless you conform to the list of requirements you cannot be saved and have eternal life.

Essentially, these are the good things you must do to receive eternal life. But what degree of discipleship and lordship does it take to make you fit for Heaven? What percentage of submission and surrender does it take to make sure that you are saved? How much dying to self and counting the cost is necessary for you to become a disciple and Christian? Of course, a person must first “come” to Christ in simple faith (Matt. 11:28; 22:17) before he can “come after” Christ to follow Him (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23). The Bible teaches lordship Christian living but not Lordship salvation. There is a difference!

Even if a list seems sensible and logical (count the cost, promise to become a disciple, a follower of Christ, take up a cross, total and absolute surrender to Christ) it actually becomes something a person is REQUIRED to DO in order to be saved and inherit eternal life. But the Scripture says, “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4) – not the demands and requirements of Lordship Salvation. In other words, God’s convicting and drawing work taking place in the human heart brings people to the place of salvation – not the required demands of Lordship Salvation (Jn. 6:44; 12:32).



Harry Ironside wrote:

“When anyone comes promising salvation to those ‘who make full surrender’ of all that they have to God, and who ‘pay the price of full salvation,’ he is preaching another gospel, for the price was paid on Calvary’s cross and the work that saves is finished. It was Christ Jesus who made the full surrender when He yielded His life on Calvary. It is His death that saves us, not our surrender in any way to Him.”

In the lordship teaching duty and demands are placed along side of the death of Christ, grace is no longer free, and the gift of eternal life must in some sense be earned. Lordship Salvation goes beyond trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. It includes the teaching that a person must *cooperate* with Christ’s program of discipleship, or make a *contract* with God, which involves obeying the commands of Jesus and making a *commitment* to Christ’s lordship, as a necessary *condition* of eternal life. This approach mixes faith with works at the time of one’s conversion.

Acts 15:1 also echoes the true nature of Lordship Salvation teaching:

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”

Lordship salvation conveys something similar: “Except ye embrace Lordship Salvation after the manner of Reformed Theology, ye cannot be saved.” “Except ye count the cost of discipleship, become a full-fledged disciple, make Jesus Lord of your life, promise to live and serve Christ for the rest of your days on earth, and be obedient to Christ’s commands, ye cannot be saved.” This legal or law approach to salvation frustrates or disregards the efficacy of God’s grace (Gal. 2:21) for salvation is no longer based solely upon God’s grace but the merits of what people do when they sign up for salvation.

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Lordship Salvation teaches that if the sinner keeps his end of the bargain, which includes surrendering, dying to self, counting the cost of discipleship, following, obeying, and making Jesus Lord of his life, then God will keep His bargain and save his soul. This is nothing more than legalism or embracing necessary requirements that a person must perform in order to be saved (Acts 15:1). In short, it’s bartering with God or making a deal with Christ for one’s salvation. But God does not make deals with sinners because He has already done everything to save them from the expression of His wrath and judgment in Hell (Jn. 3:16; 3:36; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:2).

The message of the Gospel is not “DO” but “DONE.” Jesus has done it all, paying the price for sin’s penalty. He triumphantly proclaimed on the cross, “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). Nothing we promise or do could ever add to the redemptive price Christ paid for our salvation. To state succinctly, the cost related to our salvation was endured by Christ (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18-9). The cost is not endured by a sinner

counting the cost or paying the price of his surrendered life, His promise to follow Christ, and conformity to Christ's standards of discipleship in order to be saved and become a Christian.

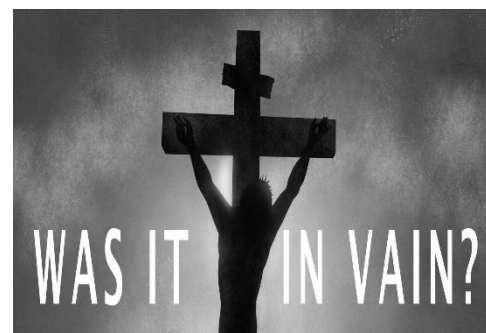


Advocates of Lordship Salvation often use the derogatory term of “cheap grace” (inexpensive grace) to describe a sinner who expresses faith alone in Christ alone without the credentials of Lordship Salvation hanging over his head. In other words, Christ's grace (His death on the cross) is somehow

cheapened (worthless) if a person does not at the time of his conversion count the cost of what it means to be a follower of Christ, surrendering his whole life to Christ, promising to become a disciple of Christ, making the lifelong commitment to obey Jesus, giving up all his sins, and making Jesus lord over his life.

In other words, if a person receives the benefits of salvation freely without meeting the demands of discipleship, without any price, without payment, without any promise or performance, then the grace of God as seen in the death of Christ has somehow lost its value or cost in failing to transform the sinner. And if there is no commitment to discipleship at the time of conversion, then Christ's death is cheapened in some way because Christ died to also transform people and give them a new way of life.

According to Lordship Salvation, in order for faith (belief in Christ) to be genuine is must have “add-ons” and be redefined to include submission, following Christ or discipleship, and the desire to make Jesus lord over every area of an individual's life. It's assumed that discipleship, obedience, and works are part of faith or else Christ's death is really of no value for it does not produce transformation. But just the opposite is true: “for if righteousness come by the law (*legalism or works*), then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21).





Lordship Salvation proponents actually rewrite the Gospel message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4) by including an additional message of personal submission to Christ in the meaning, content, or understanding of the Gospel. Walter Chantry believes the Gospel is a "synthetic Gospel" if a person is not willing to turn his entire life over to God, obey Christ's commands, become a follower of Christ, and serve Him forever. But the Gospel is something for me to believe – not something for me to do!

Of course, God's grace manifested in the death of Christ on the cross (Titus 2:11) could never be cheapened (lose its value) or become "synthetic" as Chantry concludes if a person decides to reject the Lordship Salvation requirements for salvation. Nor can God's grace gain more value based upon man's legalistic responses to obtaining salvation ("I will surrender to the Lord, I will follow Jesus, I will make Jesus lord of my life, I will obey His commands, I will become His disciple, etc.").

This is legalism in disguise. We must remind the lost sinner to remove the "I wills" and focus only on what Christ has done to save him. The Gospel is about Christ's death, burial, and resurrection – not about people dying to self, making Jesus lord over their lives, and becoming Christ's disciple. The Gospel is all about



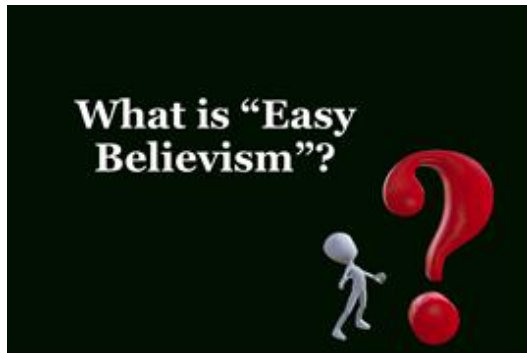
Christ and we should never mix the way man responds to Christ as somehow effecting grace and cheapening the Gospel. Actually, the cost of becoming a Christian is zero. This is because Jesus Christ paid the total cost for our redemption when He took upon Himself the wages of our sin (Rom. 6:23). However, the cost of living the Christian life is everything ("For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain" - Phil. 1:21).

Sanctifying grace is not part of the conversion experience. Saving grace (Titus 2:11) precedes sanctifying grace (Titus 2:12). This means we must always distinguish the call for *salvation* from the call to *sanctification* (or discipleship). Coming to Christ for discipleship involves a personal cost (Matt. 16:24-25) but coming to Christ for salvation does not involve any cost for it is "without price" (Isa. 55:1) and a free gift (Rev. 21:6; 22:17). "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift" (Rom. 5:15).

Romans 8:32

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Here is the point. Grace does not change; it cannot be cheapened or made more costly based upon what an individual does or does not do in his conversion response. The way a sinner responds to the Gospel does not change the tremendous payment or cost of Christ’s death on the sinner’s behalf. The Bible teaches we are “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). The price or cost of Christ’s passionate and sacrificial death upon the cross for sinners can never change its saving value. It could never be cheapened for any reason for it is “the precious (*costly, valuable*) blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:19). God forbid! Perish the thought of diminishing the value or cost of Christ’s death!



Another code word of Lordship Salvation advocates is the derogatory term “easy believism.” Those who embrace the teachings of Lordship Salvation also complain that saving faith without a commitment to works or obedience (following Christ and becoming His disciple) should be dubbed as *easy* believism or *only* believism. In other words, if faith is

nothing more than placing trust or confidence in Jesus Christ to save you, then faith, without the evidence of works at the time of conversion, becomes too easy, insufficient, and incomplete in its outward expression toward Christ and has no value in bringing a person to the place of salvation.

This is because faith must allegedly be accompanied by works even in the conversion experience. Therefore, if a person does not promise to become a follower or disciple of Christ at the time of his conversion then his faith is not genuine for it contains no works or outward commitment.

The derogatory expression of “easy believism” which is essentially “only believism” grew out of Lordship Salvation teaching and undermines faith alone in Christ without works. The Bible repeatedly teaches that faith or belief in the saving merits of Jesus Christ (His death, burial, and resurrection) is the only thing necessary to receive salvation (John 3:15-16; 6:47; 20:31; 1 Jn. 5:13; Rom. 10:13).

Romans 4:5

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Acts 16:31

“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

John 6:47

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

God does not ask men to behave in order to be saved, but to believe. Only believe! A person's salvation and eternal life is based upon faith in Jesus Christ's substitutionary death and His promise of eternal life (1 John 5:11-13; John 3:16; 6:47) - not faith in one's discipleship, commitment and obedience to Christ, perseverance, or outward performance of living.



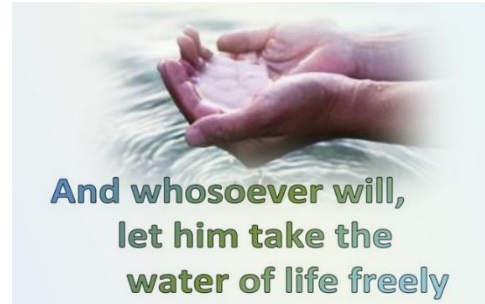
Truth be told, the repentant sinner only needs to come to Christ in simple faith believing that the penalty for his sin was paid in full and that salvation is a free gift without any add on requirements (“the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” - Rom. 6:23). A gift can only be free! It does not require another payment, another cost, or another sacrifice so a person might obtain the gift. I don't give my wife a gift and expect a payment in return. We don't give gifts to our children and expect obedience and better behavior in return. They are gifts!

Augustus Toplady wrote:

“If thou hast my discharge procured,  
And freely in my room endured  
The whole of wrath divine,  
Payment God cannot twice demand,  
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,  
And then again at mine.”



A gift is always free, and such is the case with the free gift of salvation and eternal life (“take the water of life freely” – Rev. 22:17). Salvation cannot be a free gift if a person must make specific promises to Christ and perform certain requirements for the rest of his life in order to be saved. A person cannot believe in Christ alone for his eternal destiny (Jn. 3:15-16; 6:47; 2 Tim. 1:12) and also believe that he must do something to receive it and keep it throughout his earthly life.



Lordship Salvation teaching also mixes faith with works while the Bible separates the two in relation to a person’s salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-9 declares:

“For by grace (*free grace*) are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works (*promising something, doing something, becoming something, remaining something*) lest any man should boast.”

Salvation is by grace – not by discipleship!

William Pettingill used to say:

“By grace through faith plus nothing.”

In relationship to salvation, you cannot *try* and *trust* at the same time. In Scripture we discover faith is always juxtaposed or contrasted with works in relationship to a person’s conversion and salvation experience (Rom. 3:26-28; Gal. 2:16). Faith is not doing something or meeting certain conditions. Faith is not following someone – even Christ! Faith is not surrendering, yielding, or trying. Faith is not obedience. Faith is trusting! Lordship Salvation teaching redefines the meaning of saving faith to include works.

John MacArthur, a leading proponent of Lordship Salvation, writes:

“Faith cannot be divorced from commitment” (Faith Works, p. 45). “Forsaking oneself for Christ’s sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion: It is the sine qua non of saving faith” (Gospel According to Jesus, p. 135).

This is a distortion of the true meaning of faith alone in Christ alone for one’s salvation. It muddies the waters by changing the meaning of faith and how it relates

to grace and salvation of the sinner. Proponents of Lordship attempt to make behavior and fruit (good works) essential ingredients of faith at the time of a person's salvation rather than the evidence of faith which comes after salvation. They claim faith must include works, commitment, obedience, or following Christ at the time of one's conversion. However, this is an exegetical fallacy.

The Bible is very clear on this matter. Obedience and works are the EVIDENCE that genuine faith and justification have already occurred (James 2:14-26; 1 Jn. 3:7-10) but they are not the WAY a person expresses faith in Christ, nor do good works become the manner in which an individual is justified before God (Rom. 3:24, 27-28; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 26). Works are not part of the expression of saving faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9) but they do follow faith to some extent for we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10).

The new birth comes first ("created") and then the new life ("good works") but Lordship Salvation forces the new life of the Christian experience upon the sinner and ends up frontloading the Gospel and the sinner's conversion with works. To state succinctly, works confirm a person's faith and justification, but they are not part of faith and justification for "God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6).

William Henry Griffith Thomas had the right understanding of faith and works: "I will not work my soul to save, for that work my Lord has done; but I will work like any slave, for the love of God's dear son."

Christ never expected sinners to try and come to Him on the terms of Lordship Salvation or with the yoke of legalism wrapped around their necks (Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1) as they attempt to follow Christ, live for Him, obey Him, make Him lord of their lives, and meet the requirements for discipleship. Jesus only asks sinners to come to Him without an addendum or supplemental plan they must follow. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). When coming, which is a metaphor for a simple expression of faith in Christ, sinners can find spiritual rest as a result of being forgiven of their sins and delivered from the power of sin and Satan.

We come just as we are. "Just as I am." There are no discipleship requirements, no promises to follow Christ, no previous commitments which are necessary, no deals

to make, and no programs which one must embrace. Just come as you are! What a wonderful, gracious, and free message!

John 6:37

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Revelation 22:17

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Horatius Bonar wrote these lovely words:

“Not what these hands have done  
Can save this guilty soul;  
Not what this toiling flesh has borne  
Can make my spirit whole.

Not what I feel or do  
Can give me peace with God;  
Not all my prayers, and sighs, and tears,  
Can bear my awful load.

Thy work alone, O Christ,  
Can ease this weight of sin;  
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God,  
Can give me peace within.”

Here is the bottom line of what Lordship Salvation really advocates and teaches when through disguise it adds legalism to the conversion or salvation experience.

**Lordship Salvation mixes LAW with GRACE, FAITH with WORKS, LEGALISM with LIBERTY, SALVATION with SANCTIFICATION, BEHAVIOR with BELIEF, and REFORMATION with REGENERATION. It requires a person to DO something, BECOME something, FOLLOW something, OBEY something and PROMISE something in order to be saved.**

If discipleship is necessary for salvation, then several important questions must be answered. Must a person take up a cross “daily” (Luke 9:23) in order to be saved? Must he put Christ before his own family (Lk. 14:26) in order to be saved? Must he “count the cost” of being a follower of Christ (Lk. 14:28) in order to be saved? Is this a missing part of the Gospel message that we must share with the lost so they can be saved? Is this the Gospel according to Jesus? Of course, the message of discipleship has nothing to do with becoming a Christian. If discipleship is related to salvation, then a person must also be baptized in order to be saved. This is because baptism was part of becoming a discipleship (Matt. 28:19-20). The truth is this. Salvation is something Christ promises to do for us (Jn. 10:9); it’s not something we promise to do for Him.

When I evangelize, I do not demand that lost people must somehow make Jesus lord or master over their lives in order to be saved. I tell them to believe on Jesus Christ so He can become their Savior (Acts 16:31) for He is the “Saviour of the world” (1 Jn. 4:14) and “Saviour of all men” (1 Tim. 4:10). Jesus is repeatedly called the Savior of sinners – not the Master of sinners (Phil. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:4; 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1, 11; 2 Pet. 3:18). This is the Biblical pattern and proper way to present the message of salvation to people (John 3:15-18, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 12:36).

Only believe! Believing and doing something are two different things. Believing is an expression of faith in Jesus Christ (His death, burial, and resurrection) for the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) whereas making Jesus lord or master of your life is a promise to perform and do your best for Christ. However, the faith that leads to salvation is not doing something but believing in Someone! People are not saved by obeying a plan but believing in a Person (Jesus Christ).

This obedient response to Christ and the Gospel message is called the “obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Acts 6:7). Of course, the only obedient step one can take in order to be saved is to express faith in Christ. Obedience is a *synonym* for coming to Christ (faith) at the time of salvation. It does not refer to following Christ as a disciple or any meritorious work that one must do to be saved. It does not mix works with faith. Obedience is responding to Christ in simple childlike faith. Disobedience is the failure to respond to Christ in faith.

Warren Wiersbe has stated:

“Trusting Christ is not only a matter of believing, but also obeying. Not to believe on Christ is to disobey God.”

Romans 10:16 explains it this way:

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”

An obedient faith is a believing faith, a faith that rests fully in Christ and His free offer of salvation. Belief is an act of obedience in the Gospel message, but disbelief is an act of disobedience in the Gospel message (1 Pet. 2:7).

Someone once said:

“The only thing you can do without doing anything is believe.”

The obedience of faith which is placed in Christ *for* initial salvation (John 6:29) has nothing to do with the obedience that comes *after* salvation (James 2:17, 26). To conclude that a person’s so called “obedient faith” at the time of his salvation means that he must commit to becoming a disciple of Christ, following and obeying Christ as his lord and master in order to be saved is erroneous and becomes a desperate attempt to promote the misguided teaching of Lordship Salvation. The Scriptures are very clear on the matter of saving faith (faith that results in salvation). Faith involves trusting in Christ alone to be one’s Savior – not following Christ or placing oneself under the demands of discipleship. Learning and obeying (acts of discipleship) are not *prerequisites* to salvation; they are the *products* of salvation.

George Zeller explains it like this:

“It is not our COMMITMENT that saves us; it is CHRIST who saves us. Following Christ is a result of salvation, not a condition of salvation. Before we can FOLLOW CHRIST in discipleship we must COME TO CHRIST for salvation. Before we can COME AFTER CHRIST (Luke 9:23) we must COME UNTO CHRIST (Matthew 11:28).”

Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) and following Christ as personal lord or master (Lk. 6:46) occur at two different phases in a person’s life. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ (“believe to the saving of the soul” - Heb. 10:39) occurs at the time of a person’s salvation whereas following Christ as a person’s lord (master) occurs after salvation (Matt. 16:24) and is a matter that pertains to the Christian life (John 10:27-28). I must first call upon the Lord Jesus Christ embracing His personal claims as my Savior (Rom. 10:13) before I can follow Him as my personal Lord, God, and Master of my life (Luke 9:23; Jn. 20:28). Faith comes first which then results in walking with the Lord.



Colossians 2:6

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord (*as your God and Savior*), so walk ye in him” (*in submission to Him and His will*).



It must also be understood that Biblical repentance is not the same as Lordship Salvation. Repenting before God and pledging something to God for salvation are two different matters. Repentance is a person's recognition of their need for grace; it's not a person's attempt to merit or earn grace by becoming a disciple or follower of Christ. The repentance related to salvation

(Lk. 13:3, 5; 2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 17:30) is not making promises to Christ, becoming a disciple of Christ, making Jesus Lord over one's life, obedience, or the act of reformation which comes after salvation ("fruits meet for repentance" - Matt. 3:8).

The root or core meaning of repentance is simply a "change of mind" regarding a person's own sinfulness before God, his need for the Savior (Jesus Christ), and that he can only be saved by grace without works. Actually, a person cannot get to "faith alone in Christ alone" without first repenting. Repentance opens the door so faith can occur in the sinner's heart (Acts 20:21; Lk. 24:47). The hinge on the door of faith is repentance.

This means we need to share the Gospel of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4), get out of the way, and allow a person to repent and believe on Christ (Acts 17:30; 20:21) without forcing him to conform to a legalistic list of requirements. The "gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13) does not include the message of discipleship, following Christ, or making Jesus Lord over one's life. In fact, there is no need to force poor lost sinners to surrender and give up all their sins, forsaking all for Christ, since this makes salvation into a legalistic requirement.

An unsaved and spiritually dead person (Eph. 2:1-2) cannot perform the impossible feat of giving up his sins and promising to do better in order to be saved.

Dr. H.A. Ironside once said:

"We cannot live the life until first we possess it."

Lost sinners are spiritually dead and cannot make Jesus Lord of *any* area of their lives, much less *every* area! Actually, when an individual gets saved, he becomes a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) so he can with God's new life and nature progressively become more sanctified in his living (Phil. 2:12).

Curtis Hutson was correct in his analysis:

"You don't get better to get saved; you get saved to get better."

Of course, when people truly repent (change their minds, think differently) they will possess a softened heart toward sin (Luke 15:18, 21), they will *inherently* and *inwardly* desire to be released from the strongholds of sin, Satan, and rebellion against God ("ye turned to God from idols" - 1 Thess. 1:9). In other words, in conversion they will not desire to continue to live in ongoing rebellion against God but will see themselves as sinners who have offended God and who need to be released from their enslavement to sinful living (Jn. 8:36).

Jesus taught the message of deliverance to those who were captivated in sin (Luke 14:8) and Paul spoke about turning people away from Satan's power (Acts 26:18). The *inward* turning of the heart occurs before salvation ("turned to God from idols" - 1 Thess. 1:9) but the *outward* turning comes after salvation ("to serve the living and true God" - 1 Thess. 1:9). The rebellious spirit is broken *before* conversion, but the transformation occurs *after* conversion. It should also be noted that the attitude of repentance will naturally lead to the gratitude of surrender in the Christian life.

When repenting I don't *become* something (a disciple) or *do* something (follow and obey Christ) or *promise* something (I will give up all my sins forever). When repenting I simply turn to Someone (God) in order to be freed from my sins. This means God does not require that a person must sign on the dotted line that he will actually give up all his sins, meet the demands of discipleship, obey Christ, and promise to follow Christ so he can be saved. These are terms or conditions under the guise of legalism and have nothing to do with the sorrow and the desire for deliverance from sin which is related to simple repentance. In other words, a legalistic list of Lordship Salvation requirements is not necessary to get a person to the place of repentance where he possesses an inward desire to turn to God ("turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God" - Acts 26:20) for spiritual deliverance and be released from his enslavement to sin.

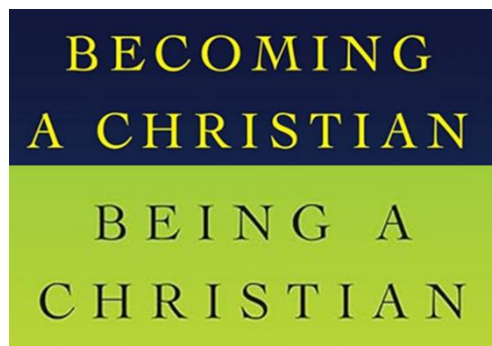
“Out of my bondage, sorrow and night,  
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;  
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.”

In Biblical repentance there are no promises to be made, no bargains to be kept, not bartering with God, and no contracts that must be signed. The sinner freely turns away from sin and legalism, embracing Christ alone as his Savior. The lordship position makes turning to God or the conversion of an individual (1 Thess. 1:9; Acts 26:18, 20) a legalistic response to specific requirements, but Biblical repentance places no demands on the sinner to follow or obey Christ the rest of his life. Sanctification is not part of the conversion experience. It's part of the Christian life.

Repentance is the result of God's work upon the human heart for “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4). In other words, God must break the rebellion in the hearts of the unsaved. This means repentance cannot be manufactured by lordship demands and requirements related to yielding, surrender, discipleship, submission, obedience, giving up all your sins, and making promises to Christ. When these requirements are presented to the unsaved sinner, they become a form of works, a list of things a person must actually DO in order to be saved.

Becoming a Christian is not the same as being a Christian or living out our life as a Christian. In *becoming* a Christian a sinner must simply repent of his sins and place simple faith in Christ (Acts 20:21). However, in *being* a Christian a believer is given instructions on yielding to God, surrender, obedience, submission, commitment, sanctification, etc.

(Rom. 6, 8, 12, 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Gal. 2:20). Lordship Salvation confuses the way a person becomes a Christian with the life of being a Christian.



Essentially, repentance is a change of mind and heart regarding an individual's sinfulness before God and desire to be freed from sin's enslavement, a change of attitude concerning a person's need for Christ as Savior, and that salvation is by

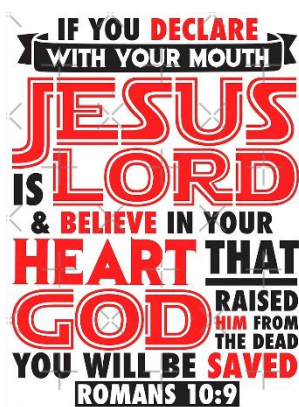
grace alone without works. Repentance becomes the springboard out of which faith is generated and results in a person's salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

In summary, Lordship Salvation teaches a person must die to self, count the cost of following Christ, be willing to pay the price, meet the necessary requirements for discipleship, become a follower of Christ, commit himself totally to Christ, step out to obey His commands, make Jesus lord over area of his life, take the initiative to serve Christ, and comply with the conditions that Jesus requires for salvation, if he wants to be saved. However, salvation is by grace and not by discipleship or "not according to our works" (2 Tim. 1:9) and "Not by works of righteousness which we have done" (Tit. 3:5).

The legalism of Lordship Salvation is not the way to bring people to repentance, faith, and salvation. We must simply show people the cross (John 3:15-16) and allow God to work repentance and faith in their hearts (Rom. 2:4) through the means of the Gospel and Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:13; John 16:8) without forcing them into a Lordship Salvation contract that is binding for their entire lives.

Romans 10:9-10 is sometimes used to promote Lordship Salvation:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (*Jesus as Lord*), 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."



A simple way to summarize what Paul is teaching in these verses is that **"The HEART believes, and the MOUTH agrees."** This text does not teach that a person must surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ and become His disciple in order to be saved. It is teaching that belief, which includes belief in the resurrection is necessary for one's salvation, and afterward confession follows as the fruit or evidence of a person's faith. **Believing is the ROOT; confession is the FRUIT.** The confession of Christ's deity ("Jesus as Lord") after one is saved validates or confirms a person's salvation.

The purpose of Romans 10:9-10 is not designed to only teach the WAY of salvation but also the PROOF of one's salvation. In these verses, Paul is speaking of the

confession of Christ's deity ("Jesus as Lord" – Jesus as God) as the evidence or a token of one's saving faith in the resurrected Christ. This confession becomes the confirmation of a person's salvation. Those who embrace Christ won't deny Christ but acknowledge His deity and not "draw back unto perdition" (Heb. 10:38-39).

The Bible says that confession is made "unto salvation" (not for salvation). Confession is the result or evidence of one's salvation and demonstrates that a person's faith already rests in the resurrected Christ. **Christ does not *become* our Lord in order to be saved. We must *believe* that He is the Lord God who has risen from the dead to save us.** Confession is not something that a person does in order to be saved; confession is something that a person does after they are saved (Matthew 10:32; Rom.10:9). The word "confess" simply means that a person must give consent or agreement to what all Christians believe about Jesus Christ – that He is God and has risen from the dead. This confession is the outward evidence of a person's newfound faith in Christ and His resurrection.

The Lordship Salvation approach eventually creates doubt or a lack of assurance regarding a person's salvation when they find themselves not honoring the list of requirements they signed up for at the time of conversion. When they do not come good on their promises, perseverance, and performance which was part of their initial commitment to



Christ, they can readily doubt the truth regarding their salvation. Without even realizing it a person's salvation may not be completely *grace-centered* in Christ alone but also *works-oriented*. This is because of the demands of discipleship placed upon them at the time of salvation, the good works they must continue to do, and the promises they must keep as followers of Christ which were part of their original saving agreement.

The Lordship Salvation teaching leads a person into the sea of relativity, subjectivity, and uncertainty regarding his salvation. Salvation becomes nothing more than a game of percentages. Here is the real issue. How much lordship is enough? Is 75% submission enough to get one saved? Is 85% required? How about 100%? Who's to say? If 100% submission is required for salvation, then there is no one who ever believed in God that is saved, not even David, Abraham, or Noah! Lordship



proponents counter this by saying, “Well, one must be at least willing to submit to the Lordship of Christ.” But this only begs the question: “How willing must we be to give up all our sins, follow Christ, surrender, make Jesus our lord and master, and die to ourselves?” Must a person be 80%, 90% or 100% willing? We still have the troubling question of “how much?” Since following, obeying, making Christ Lord, and becoming a disciple is NOT part of conversion a person does not need to be *willing* to DO these things in order to be saved for these are smokescreens created as requirements necessary for salvation.

The Bible does not say in Acts 16:31, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and also count the cost, take up your cross daily and follow Christ, put Christ before your family, surrender, yield, die to yourself, make Jesus your lord and master, become His disciple and follower and never look back, give up all your sins and thou shalt be saved...**” This is preposterous and undermines the message of free grace (Rom. 3:24) and the justifying message “without works” (Rom. 4:6). It turns the good news into bad news!

The unsaved sinner who is without hope, Christ, and God (Eph. 4:4) simply needs to take the free offer of salvation: “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Rev. 21:6). “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24). Both the taking and giving are free! The adjectives “freely” imply no cost or work on the sinner’s behalf.

D.L. Moody used to say this concerning salvation:

“Take it as you take the air into your lungs. It is free, absolutely free.”

Our salvation and justification before God really are free. We don’t have to meet the demands of Lordship/Mastery/Discipleship Salvation and turn salvation into a legalistic contract between the believer and God. We don’t need to reinvent the wheel or change the meaning of faith to mean surrender, lordship, discipleship, counting the cost, dying to self, or making Jesus lord over one’s life to comply with the debunked teaching of Lordship Salvation or Lordship Legalism.

The Bible corrects Lordship Salvation with the GRACE principle in Romans 11:6:

“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.”

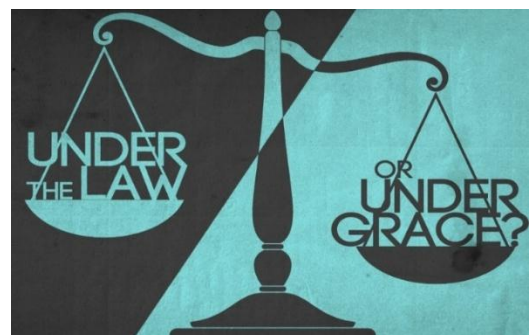
When you trust in grace to save you and maintain your salvation (Tit. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:12) you are saved without a doubt! This means my *primary* assurance is not based on what I am doing for Christ (Lordship Salvation) but what Christ has done for me on the cross and His promise of eternal life (Jn. 3:16; 6:47; 1 Jn. 5:11-13; Gal. 3:10). A *secondary* confirmation (an added bonus) that I am saved is not based upon what I am doing for Christ but what Christ is doing in my life (Lordship Christian living) - 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 2:3-5; 3:7-10; 2 Cor. 13:5.

This is a very basic and general examination that demonstrates Christ lives within us and is progressively transforming our lives (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:13). It's not a meticulous and nerve-wracking exam to try and figure out whether or not we are saved but a general recognition that God is at work in our lives (2 Cor. 3:18). So there is a word of warning. When we seek to maintain our assurance by becoming overly obsessed at self-examination or looking at ourselves instead of Christ's redemptive work on the cross (Jn. 3:14-15), then we will eventually doubt our salvation. Our assurance is based upon Christ and His free gift and promise of eternal life (Jn. 3:16, 36; 4:14; 5:24) – not how good or bad we have been. We need to keep “looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) for the assurance of salvation – not at ourselves.

God declared long ago in Isaiah 45:22, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” This was the verse that was used in the conversion of Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon reminisces: “I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, ‘Look!’ what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away!”

Blessed noonday truth! A simple look of faith toward Christ, who is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7), and one is immediately and forever saved from Hell and justified in the presence of God on the basis of Christ's finished work. (2 Cor. 5:21). The transaction is forever finished, and we go free!

In closing, there is plenty of law (legalism) in Lordship Salvation. Instead of promoting and preserving holiness, the teaching of Lordship Salvation actually destroys the very foundation upon which holiness must be built. By returning to the principle of law, it has forfeited



the spiritual power of grace to both SAVE (Eph. 2:8-9) and SANCTIFY people (Rom. 6:14-15).

We must begin the Christian life with grace (Acts 15:11; 2 Tim. 1:9) and find security in God's grace ("this grace wherein we stand" - Rom. 5:2). We then must continue to focus on the liberty and sanctification that grace brings during the Christian life (Rom. 6:1-15; Titus 2:11-12) and end our lives being rooted and resting in grace ("and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" - Rom. 5:2). Dearly beloved, grace will lead us home!

"Some day the silver cord will break,  
And I no more as now shall sing;  
But oh, the joy when I shall wake  
Within the palace of the King!

And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story – Saved by grace;  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story – Saved by grace."

