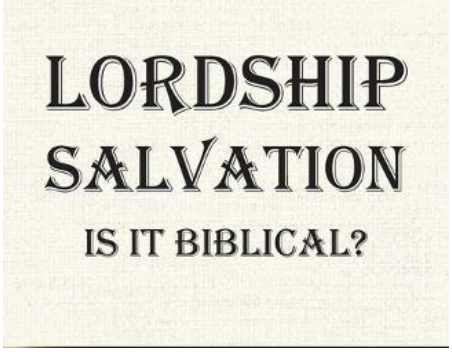
The Errors of Lordship Salvation

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

D. L. Moody told this story:
"An old man got up in one of our meetings and said, 'I have been forty-two years learning three things.' I pricked up my ears at that. I thought if I could find out in three minutes what a man had taken forty-two years to learn, I should like to do it. The first thing he said he had learned was that he could do nothing toward his own salvation. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'that is worth learning.' The second thing he found out was that God did not require him to do anything. Well, that was worth finding out, too. And the third thing was that the Lord Jesus Christ had done it all, that salvation was finished, and that all he had to do was to take it."

Explanation of Lordship Salvation



Can it be true that God does not require the sinner to do anything in order to be saved? Can it be true that God only asks a poor lost sinner to take salvation as a free gift? Can it be true that salvation does not require any previous commitment to following Christ or obedience? It is true because eternal life is called "the gift of God" (Rom. 6:23). It is true because salvation is called "the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8) and a person receives this gift "through faith" (not following). It is true since a sinner is only asked to "come" (Rev. 22:17) and "take the water of life freely" (not follow). It is true since salvation is offered freely "without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). However, not everyone in the evangelical community would agree with this conclusion.

Those who embrace the teaching of Lordship Salvation would disagree and convey that a person must promise to follow Christ, obey Him, and make Christ Lord over area of his life before he can be saved. Lordship Salvation teaches there is a price or cost that is attached to salvation. In short, a person must **meet** the 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.

Lordship Salvation is a serious departure from the historic and Biblical teachings regarding the content of the Gospel message, old-fashioned repentance, and simple faith in Christ. When this teaching is analyzed in the light of God's Word it is found to be spurious and misleading. Lordship Salvation pertains to the area of a person's salvation and specifically how a person is saved. For this reason, it becomes a serious issue in relationship to what a person must do in order to be saved. It strikes at the very heart of the orthodox Christian faith.

The Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-3) is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes (Rom. 1:16). However, there are some who are teaching a different Gospel message today which includes man's promise to follow Christ or become a disciple of Christ. They are also redefining the Biblical meaning of the words such as repentance, faith and Lord to support their Lordship Salvation teaching. Semantics is important in our study of God's Word and the specific words related to a person's salvation. Therefore, words in this study will be discussed and defined.

Lordship Salvation teachers have created a disclaimer which says repentance and faith also involve the promise to actually give up all our sins forever and follow Christ, make Jesus Lord of one's life, meet the necessary requirements related to discipleship, and serve and obey Christ the rest of our days on earth. **In Lordship Salvation a <u>promise</u> must be made to obey Christ, <u>plans</u> need to be followed regarding discipleship, and <u>performance</u> is required, so one can be saved and meet the conditions for eternal life.**

Of course, Lordship Salvation advocates deny they are teaching salvation by works and anybody who claims they are promoting legalism has an inaccurate assessment of their teaching. However, their teaching, writing, and conclusions speak volumes against salvation by God's free grace. **But if a person must <u>do</u> something, <u>become</u> something, and <u>promise</u> something in order to be saved, then the sinner's response to God involves legalism**

(Acts 15:1). It's faith alone in Christ alone! But the disclaimer of Lordship salvation reads: "It's faith alone in Christ alone, only when a person steps out to obey Christ, follow Him, observe the conditions of discipleship, and promises to make Jesus Lord of his life forever." Actually, submission to Jesus' lordship and following Christ destroys the reformation principle of salvation by faith alone. Neither Calvin nor Luther taught Lordship Salvation or that the meaning of faith includes submission and obedience to Christ.

Let's state the Lordship position in a simple fashion. **Lordship Salvation is the view that a commitment to obedience must be a part of genuine spiritual conversion.** Only when certain requirements are met can a person be saved. It's concluded by those who embrace Lordship Salvation that if these requirements are not included as part of the Gospel message and a person's response to God, then their repentance and faith are not genuine. If one does not make Jesus Lord of their lives forever, count the cost and surrender their entire lives to Christ forever, then they cannot be saved forever.

Lordship salvation suggests that a man is saved only when he enters upon a life of following Jesus, that is, when he receives Jesus as Lord (personal Master of his life). This actually means that a person must <u>become</u> a follower of Christ, <u>become</u> a disciple of Christ, <u>become</u> obedient to Christ, and <u>become</u> a servant of Christ in order to meet Christ's conditions and criteria for eternal life. Lordship salvation teaches that a person must become something and continue to be something in order to secure their salvation. **The glorious truth about salvation is that we do not have to <u>become</u> anything to be saved; we simply <u>come</u> to Someone to be saved (Matt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17).**

Here is the bottom line of what Lordship Salvation teaching is really saying. If you don't **meet** the requirements for discipleship, you can't be saved. If you don't **become** a follower of Christ, you can't be saved. If you don't **commit** yourself totally to Christ, you can't be saved. If you don't take the initiative to **obey** His commands, you can't be saved. If you don't **make** Jesus Lord over every area of your life you can't be saved. If you don't **comply** with the conditions that Jesus requires for salvation, then you can't be saved. If you don't step out to **serve** Christ, you can't be saved.

Does this sound like the free gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23) and salvation by grace or God's unmerited favor (Eph. 2:8-9)? **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 essentially teaches that an unsaved person must make Jesus Lord of his life and become an obedient follower of Christ in order to be saved.

Lordship Salvation teaching requires the sinner to make a contract with God. The sinner must measure up to His side of the bargain, if he is going to receive eternal life. The sinner must do something, be obedient to Christ's commands and plan for discipleship, so he can receive eternal life. The teaching basically says that when a person promises to give something to Christ, it's only then that Christ will promise to give eternal life to him. In essence, if we give something to Christ then Christ will in return give something to us.

Lordship Salvation goes beyond trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. It includes the teaching that a person must <u>cooperate</u> with Christ's program of discipleship, or make a <u>contract</u> with God, which involves obeying the <u>commands</u> of Jesus and making a <u>commitment</u> to Christ's lordship, as a necessary <u>condition</u> of eternal life. In short, a contract is needed between God and the sinner so the unsaved person can meet God's requirements for eternal life. The sinner must be willing to pay the price for his salvation. He must make Christ total Lord or Master over every area of his life, step out and become a follower of Christ, give up all his sins, deny himself, surrender his whole life to God, and take up a cross daily, which involves daily sacrifice for Christ.

This is a popular teaching today, which may sound good on the surface, but let's rethink this method and approach to presenting the Gospel. Although the Lordship advocates will deny it and claim that we misunderstand their position, the whole idea of meeting certain requirements for salvation actually becomes a *works approach* to salvation instead of a "faith alone" in "Christ alone" approach (Eph. 2:8-9).

This approach mixes faith with works at the time of one's conversion. This is because in Lordship Salvation true faith or genuine belief means much

more than just reliance or trust in Christ as Savior. It also means that a person must make Jesus their Lord (master) by meeting certain requirements for holy living or meeting the terms of discipleship. This lordship approach stresses the need that people can be saved only when they make a total commitment to following Christ the rest of their days. In other words, a person's faith cannot be genuine unless it meets the requirements of discipleship which involves an absolute commitment to follow Christ, obey Christ, live for Christ, and serve Him the rest of their days on earth. **The simple truth is this. Making Jesus our Master or Lord, promising to do something that will please God, or pledging something to God has nothing to do with our salvation.**

The Lordship Salvation message is presented to lost people and is said to be the Gospel that Jesus preached while He was here on earth (The Gospel according to Jesus) and the Gospel message that Paul preached (The Gospel according to Paul) and the same Gospel that the other apostle presented in the epistles (The Gospel according to the apostles).

Evangelism and Lordship Salvation

When witnessing, I do not demand that unsaved people must **follow** Christ, in order to be saved. I tell them to **believe** on Christ (Acts 16:31; John 6:47) so that Christ can become their Savior. Where is a person called upon to follow Christ so they can be saved? All the disciple texts about taking up a cross "daily" (Luke 9:23) have nothing to do with Christ's call to salvation.

Christ's call to salvation consists of <u>coming</u> (Matt. 11:28) whereas His call to discipleship consists of <u>following</u> (Matt. 16:24). This following comes after salvation. 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?** Is this the message we must

share with the lost so they can be saved? Of course, this message has nothing to do with becoming a Christian but living the Christian life. The truth is this. Salvation is something Christ promises to do for us; it's not something we promise to do for Him. Of course, this message has nothing to do with becoming a Christian but living the Christian life. 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 **make** Jesus Lord of their lives in order to be saved. I tell them to **believe** on Jesus Christ so He can become their Savior. 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). *Believing and making are two different things.* Believing is an expression of faith in Jesus Christ whereas making Jesus Lord of your life is a performance and promise given to Christ. Where does the Bible say we must make Jesus Lord of our lives in order to be saved? Where does the Bible say we must promise to obey Christ the rest of our lives? Does Christ promise to save us on the basis of our belief in Him or on the basis of a promise we make to Him?

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."

God does not ask men to <u>behave</u> in order to be saved, but to <u>believe</u>. Here is the simple truth. Christ has called us to *believe* in Him for salvation (John 6:47); He has not called us to *behave* for our salvation. Let's stop creating so much confusion about what a person must do to be saved! The Bible is very clear on this matter. **Paul did not say a person must make a commitment to following Christ, obey Christ's commands and plan for discipleship, and promise to serve Christ the rest of his days on earth, so that he can be saved.** Paul simply said a person must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ so that he might be saved. There are no disclaimers or underlying theological jargon behind the simple word believe.

When sharing the Gospel, I do not tell an unsaved person they must **promise** to follow or obey Christ the rest of their lives in order to be saved. I share with them the **promise of eternal life** that they can have through simple faith in Christ (John 3:16; 6:47; 1 John 5:11-13). Eternal life is not based upon a sinner's promise to follow Christ or be obedient to Christ's discipleship program and commands. It's solely based upon God's promise to grant eternal life to every believing sinner (John 5:24). **Eternal life has nothing to do with man's promise to God but God's promise to man.** The promise of eternal life is comparable to a free gift which is received without any price (Rom. 6:23 – "the gift of God is eternal life" and Isa. 55:1 – "without money and without price"). **There is no price tag attached to a free gift!** This is because the price was already paid when Jesus died on the cross (1 Cor. 6:20 – "For ye are bought with a price"). No more price is demanded.

I don't evangelize lost people by telling them to **submit**, **surrender**, or **yield** to Christ's Lordship in order to be saved. This is because submission and surrender to Christ's lordship is not part of a man's response to Christ for salvation. When I place a life of surrender or submission to Christ before a poor lost sinner as a requirement of salvation, I turn surrender (a natural part a person's repentance) into a legalistic requirement or act of conformity a person must meet, reach, or attain in order to be saved.

Submitting and yielding are words that have to do with living the Christian life – not salvation (James 4:7; Rom. 6:13). They are not part of the conversion experience (Acts 3:19; 20:21). The words repentance and faith are linked to conversion – not the specific words of submission and yielding to Christ. **Submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ is an issue of spiritual growth (2 Pet. 3:18) - not salvation.** Christians absolutely should submit to Him (Rom. 12:1-2). However, an unsaved person does not have to submit or surrender every area of his life to God so that he can be saved. A changed life and submission to Christ's lordship is the *result* of salvation, not a legalistic *requirement* for salvation. **When it comes to salvation, the sinner comes to the Savior like a beggar, unable to offer to God the right kind of submission, surrender, yielding, and dedication.**

Luke 18:13
"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

The kind of faith that saves is faith alone in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9). It's a faith where natural repentance has already occurred (an inward turning away from sin). It's not a works faith where one must promise to do something, become something, or serve God the rest of one's life, make Jesus Lord of one's life forever, turn over one's entire personality and being to God, or reform one's life. Instead, it's a faith that rests only in Christ alone for salvation. **The faith that leads to salvation is not <u>doing</u> something but <u>believing</u> in Someone!** Faith is only one thing – faith (trust or reliance in Jesus Christ for salvation). We must be careful that we do not add anything to the meaning of faith. On the other hand, a person must be willing to repent of his sins before God (Acts 20:21) before he is ready to express faith alone in Christ alone for salvation. A person in open rebellion against God is not ready to express faith.

As already mentioned, there is a natural built-in response of surrender in the heart of a repentant person who changes his mind and heart about his sin and need to be saved (Matt. 21:29; 1 Thess. 1:9) but to place surrender, following Christ, and obedience on the table as necessary requirements for a person to be saved, turns the conversion of a believer into a legalistic observance and need to perform certain acts so he can be saved.

I usually ask somebody this question: "Is anything keeping you from coming to faith in Jesus Christ? If not, why don't you express faith in Christ today?" If they seem unsure, I can talk to them about repentance and their need to possess a heart that is no longer willing to live in rebellion against God (Matt. 24:47; Isa 55:7). The point is this. If a person is ready to express faith in Christ, they have already repented in their hearts, since repentance precedes and yet works together with faith (Acts 20:21; Heb. 6:1). If people's hearts have already been broken over their sins, they are ready to be released from their slavery to sin and place faith in Christ.

The purpose in witnessing to the lost is not to present Lordship salvation, which is essentially getting people to promise something, give up things, or

become something so they can be saved. **The purpose in witnessing to the unsaved masses is to point them to the saving work and promise of Jesus Christ (John 1:29; 3:16; 6:47).** When witnessing to the unsaved we must allow God to work repentance in the hearts of people (Rom. 2:4), so they can be prepared to place faith in Christ. It's not our job, or the message of the Gospel, to get sinners to *promise* they must serve God the rest of their lives in order to be saved. Nor should we tell them that they must *make* Jesus Lord over every area of their lives forever, and *follow* Jesus Christ, or become a *disciple* of Jesus Christ, as long as they live, in order to be saved.

Following Christ and changing one's life are matters that deal with the Christian life. Repentance is one thing (a change of mind and heart toward sin and desire to forsake sin) but sharing Lordship salvation (discipleship salvation, following Jesus, making Jesus Master over every area of one's life, surrender, yielding, submission, reformation) is something altogether different. **People are not saved by obeying a plan but believing in a Person (Jesus Christ).** Therefore, we must present Christ to them.

Acts 8:5
"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."

We should do the same today. We must preach or proclaim Christ and not Lordship Salvation to lost people. The goal in evangelism is preaching the claims of Jesus Christ regarding His personal work and promise of eternal life (John 3:15-18). When we accomplish this task, we are doing the work of evangelism. Anything else is a diversion from true evangelism.

Repentance or Discipleship?

Lordship Salvation teaches that repentance means submission to Christ's lordship, obedience to Christ, meeting Christ's demands for discipleship, and following Christ. But all these things involve the believer

doing something to earn or merit God's favor or grace. Obedience, discipleship, or following Christ is not the Biblical meaning or understanding of the word repentance. **Biblical repentance is a change of attitude toward sin and a desire to no longer live in rebellion against God.** If a person changes their mind or attitude about sin, they will be ready and willing to forsake sin in their Christian life. However, the repentance that leads to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10) does not involve the upfront legalistic requirements of surrendering one's life to Christ, obeying Christ, making Christ lord over one's life, or becoming a follower of Christ. If this were the case, then a person would have to do these things to earn his salvation.

Saving repentance does not mean committing yourself to Christ forever, putting Christ on the throne of your life, confessing Christ publicly, being a disciple of Christ, forsaking or confessing all your known sins, reforming your life, counting the cost, taking up a cross, changing your behavior, or promising Christ that you will serve and follow Him and be a better person and obey Him. These are the *results* but not *means* of salvation. Discipleship and following Christ is something that occurs after salvation and is actually the fruit of repentance (Matt. 3:8) or what follows on the heels of all true repentance.

Repentance is part of a man's conversion or turning to God (Acts 3:19). Therefore, I do tell a lost person they must **repent** (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9) which means they must change their thinking and attitude about anything that is keeping them from coming to faith in Christ (Jesus' deity, human works, man's sin, concept of God, unbelief, etc.). **If a person changes their thinking or attitude about sin, they will also naturally (without the demands of legalism) be *willing* to forsake those sins which they know are against God's holiness and commands, or as the Scripture says, "turn to God from idols" (1 Thess. 1:9) in the conversion response.** You won't have to place a legalistic list of requirements before them to make sure they do it!

A person who truly repents over his sins will desire pardon and release from his sins (Acts 26:18). He is ready or willing to be released from sin's power (Col. 1:13). This is a natural part of the repentance response toward God. A person is ready to be delivered from his sins and forsake them if he truly is repentant. **The point is this, sinners can experience brokenness over their**

sins and desire liberation from their sins without making promises, contracts, bargains, and legalistic requirements with God.

Again, I usually ask people, "Is there anything keeping you from coming to Christ and casting your faith upon Him? If they are not prepared to trust Christ as their Savior, then they have not yet repented of those very things, which are keeping them from the Savior ("men loved darkness rather than light" - John 3:19). **A heart that is in rebellion against God cannot be saved!** Essentially, repentance involves the desire to be liberated from sin and no longer live under sin's power. An unsaved person will certainly possess this desire, if he is ready to be saved. No legalistic list will produce repentance in the heart – only God can do this (Rom. 2:4).

It should be noted that those who follow Lordship Salvation teaching demand that sinners must surrender their entire lives to God forever in order to be saved. This commitment to surrender is designed to bring the sinner out of his state of rebellion against God. However, this is actually man's approach to change a sinner's rebellious spirit, by leading him to make a legalistic promise to God, that he will surrender his life forever to inherit eternal life. I must stress once again that a person's repentance over sin will naturally produce a desire to be liberated from sin (Isa. 55:7; John 8:11).

The soul winner should never set up "surrender" requirements or any other stipulations (discipleship, mastery, lordship, counting the cost) as the necessary *means* of salvation and entrance into eternal life. There are no specified conditions that a sinner must meet in order to receive eternal life (Isa. 55:1). When genuine repentance occurs in the heart, a person will naturally want to be released from his sins and no longer rebel against God.

When someone is ready to believe they can do so immediately. There is no need to preach repentance to them since this has already been worked out in their hearts by God ("the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" - Rom. 2:4). John's Gospel confirms this by repeatedly emphasizing the sinner's response to Christ as belief (John 3:15-16; 36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:26; 12;36; 20:31). *In John's Gospel repentance is understood to be a preparatory factor to belief in Christ.* Once a sinner is ready to depart from the darkness

(John 3:19) and be released from his sins they are then ready to express belief in the person of Christ (John 3:16) and His promise of eternal life (John 6:47).

Faith and repentance are two essential components of a person's conversion (Acts 20:21; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:47). *Conversion itself implies a turning or reversal of one's life from a former belief system and lifestyle that was opposed to Christ.* Conversion is like a coin with two sides. One side of the coin is repentance, and the other side is faith. Although they are distinct, one does not exist without the other. Unless a coin is counterfeit or bogus, it will always have both heads and tails.

The point is this. Genuine conversion will always involve both repentance and faith. Sometimes in Scripture only one side of the conversion coin is shown. The book of Acts illustrates this. Some passages only mention the necessity of repentance (Acts 2:37-38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 17:30). Others require only faith (Acts 8:12-13; 10:43; 11:17; 13:39; 16:30-31). However, when the Scripture mentions one over the other (John 3:15-16), it does not exclude the other, since both work harmoniously together to bring a person to Christ.

When witnessing to unsaved people, I have been asked by some unsaved people, "Must I give up my sin or change my life?" Of course, the way to answer this question is rather simple. I usually respond, "Not until you are ready to be liberated from your sin will you want to embrace Christ as your Savior." This is because repentance always precedes faith in the conversion response (Acts 20:21). Scripturally speaking, a person does not have to actually give up their sins, change their life, or meet any other conditions for salvation; however, when a person is under the Spirit's conviction, that person will naturally want to be liberated from their sins and change their course in life, if they are truly repentant. They will want to turn to God from their idols and rebellious ways (1 Thess. 1:9). Where there is no genuine repentance there can be no genuine faith directed toward Christ.

The simple truth is this, people need to possess a different *attitude* toward sin, if they are going to be saved. If people have a change of attitude toward their sins, they will be *willing* to change the course and direction of their

lives. Therefore, there is no need to press them with legalistic lordship/master/discipleship requirements in order to get them to change their lifestyle.

My point is this, let God work repentance in the hearts of people (Rom. 2:4). This is not something we create by teaching that repentance involves *following* Christ, *submitting* to His plan for discipleship, *obedience* to His commands, and *making* Jesus Lord of every area in one's life. When a man is ready to repent, he will not need coaxing or some kind of legalistic blueprint to follow. He will already be willing to turn to God and break with sin (Acts 15:19; 1 Thess. 1:9). A *natural surrender* takes place in the heart of a person who repents of his sins, so that his life will result in a change of direction, following his salvation (Matt. 21:28-29; Acts 26:20; Ezekiel 14:6; 18:30). It is unbiblical to preach to the unsaved that a person *must* be obedient to Christ, follow His commands, become His disciple, and give up all his sins forever so he can be saved.

When a person repents, he will already hate his sin (Luke 15:18-19) and want Christ to change his life by saving, freeing, and delivering him from the strongholds of sin in his life (Ezek. 14:6; 18:30). **All true repentance involves an inward desire to turn away from sin and be released from sin.** The repentant person says, "I'm going in the wrong direction and need to redirect my life away from my sinful pattern of living."

Repentance is to be sorry enough to quit sinning! Therefore, a person does not need to be presented with a list of legalistic requirements that he must meet, follow, or obey in order to receive eternal life. A sinner does not need to conform to Christ's standards of discipleship to be saved or make promises that he cannot keep by his own flesh (John 6:63). **A person can repent before God without meeting a list of requirements or making discipleship promises.** A person can repent and want to be released from his sins without promising to follow Christ, become His disciple, and obey Him the rest of his life.

There is a vast difference between Biblical repentance and discipleship. Likewise, there is a marked difference between the "Lordship Salvation" approach to evangelism (sinners needing to meet certain requirements and

conditions for eternal life) and presenting the message of repentance to unsaved people (sinners changing their mind about their sins and wanting to be liberated from these sins).

<u>Lordship Salvation Premise:</u> We must repent in order to be saved. Repentance means to "to turn away from sin." Therefore, we must give up our sins, become a follower of Christ, obey His commands, follow Christ's credentials for discipleship, and meet Christ's conditions for eternal life in order to be saved.

The problem with the Lordship Salvation premise or proposition is that they confuse the **root** of repentance (a new attitude or desire to turn away and be released from sin), with the **fruit** of repentance (a change in behavior and conduct). The "fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8) come after the root of repentance has already occurred ("Repent ye" – Matt. 3:2). The inward repentance and turning to God occur first within the heart and the "works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20) occur afterward in the change of life. A person must first repent and then "do the first works" (Rev. 2:8). **The fruit comes after the root.**

The Root
"By God's word at last my sin I learned;
Then I trembled at the law I'd spurned,
Till my guilty soul imploring turned
To Calvary."

The Fruit
"Now I've giv'n to Jesus ev'rything;
Now I gladly own Him as my King;
Now my raptured soul can only sing
Of Calvary."

Don't confuse the **root** of repentance (change of mind and heart about one's sin) with the **fruit** of repentance (following Christ which comes after salvation). The **root** of repentance is "**how ye turned to God from idols**" (1 Thess. 1:9). It involves the inward change of mind and heart toward those things that keep people from coming to Christ in faith. However, the **fruit** of

repentance happens after salvation "**to serve the living and true God**" (1 Thess. 1:9). The real issue in repentance is not a legalistic requirement of surrendering to Christ's lordship, the outward practice of giving up sins (reformation), or becoming a disciple of Christ, but repenting of your sins which involves an *inward* desire to forsake sin and be released from its power. The root occurs in the heart before salvation and the fruit takes place in the life after salvation. **Don't confuse the fruit with the root!**
Jesus said in Matthew 21:28-29:

"But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented **(the root or repentance)**, and went **(the fruit of repentance)**."

The ROOT of Repentance	The FRUIT of Repentance
(Occurs Before Salvation)	(Occurs After Salvation)
"turned to God from idols" (1 Thess. 1:9)	"to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9)
A change of mind and heart about sin, unbelief, a need for Christ and salvation (2 Pet. 3:9; Lk. 13:3, 5; Matt. 21:29)	"works meet for repentance" (which correspond to repentance) (Acts 26:20)
An inward turning and desire for pardon and release from sin's power (Acts 3:19; 26:18; 28:27)	Making Jesus Lord (Luke 6:46)
A different attitude toward sin (Ps. 51:4; Luke 15:18, 21; Acts 2:37)	Following Christ (Luke 9:23)
A willingness to turn away from sin (Isa. 55:7; Ezek. 14:6; 18:30; Acts 26:18)	Obeying Christ (Acts 9:6)
Loving the light more than the darkness (John 3:19)	Becoming a disciple (Luke 14:26-27)
	Counting the cost (Luke 14:28)
	Giving up sins (John 8:11)
	Transforming one's life (2 Cor. 3:18)

To join together the root with the fruit as Lordship Salvation teachers do is to create confusion regarding the sinner's response toward God at the time

of conversion. Lordship teaching claims that a person must promise to follow Christ, become a disciple of Christ, and make Jesus Lord over his life forever in order to be saved. This is hardly the Biblical response of repentance. The root of repentance simply involves a willingness to break free from sin and anything that is keeping a person from coming to faith in Christ (Heb. 6:1). It does not involve following, obeying, or making commitments to Christ in order to receive salvation.

Repentance from sin and following Christ are two different issues dealing with two different people. **Repentance is for unbelievers and is related to the issue of salvation (2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Pet. 3:9) whereas following Christ is for Christians and is related to the issue of service in the Christian life (Luke 9:23).**

Something else needs to be made clear at this point. **Repenting before God and pledging something to God for salvation are two different matters.** The concept of inwardly turning away from sin is Biblical as it pertains to a person's salvation (1 Thess. 1:9). No person can be saved who wants to live in open rebellion against God. However, following and obeying Christ is not part of repentance or the conversion response toward God.

Conversion does not involve making promises and pledges to God about giving up one's sins forever and becoming an obedient disciple of Christ. *Salvation is not a bartering system between the sinner and God*. It simply involves a willingness to turn to God, away from one's sin, and place simple faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. There are no demands related to discipleship that must be met. There are no promises which must be made, no plans that must be followed, and no legalistic performance that one must follow to meet the conditions for eternal life.

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 repenting sinner will already have the *attitude and desire to change* his life if he is truly broken over his sins. There is no need to set up a system of rules and requirements that the sinner must outwardly follow or ascribe to

in order to get him to change his life. There is no reason to push legalistic lordship requirements upon unsaved people that pertain to the Christian life. **The fact that a person is broken over sin and wants to turn to God away from his sin is the normal response of a repentant sinner (1 Thess. 1:9; Luke 15:18).**

Of course, inwardly turning away from sin is not the same thing as legalistically meeting certain requirements or conditions for salvation. **Desiring to turn away from sin and wanting to be liberated from the power of sin is not a legalistic attempt to gain or merit one's salvation.** Wanting to be freed from sin's power is not the same as promising God that you will obey, serve, and become His obedient follower so you can be saved. The truth is this. If we will allow a man to turn to God or repent and be converted in God's way, we won't need to prescribe any program or legalist requirements that he must follow. **When sharing the Gospel, we should get out of the way, allow the sinner to repent and turn to God, without setting before him a list of things that he must do to get to God.**

A person who repents in a *Biblical fashion* will pray something like this: "God, I am sorry for my sin. I am ready to turn away from my sin, be freed from sin's power, and place my total confidence and trust in Jesus Christ alone to save me and get me to Heaven." Those who are pressured by Lordship Salvation teaching take the conversion response much further and say something altogether different. "God, I am ready to *obey* you, *follow* you, *make* You Master over every area in my life and *serve* you the rest of my days. I *promise* to *meet* the conditions and credentials for discipleship. I will *count the cost* and try hard to *take up my cross* daily and *follow* You. From this point forward I will *commit* my entire life to You, *surrender* to You, *obey* You and *make* you Lord and Ruler over my life forever as I place my faith in Your Son to save me."

Repentance is essentially a change of mind and heart about one's sin which involves a *willingness* to change one's direction of life. Repentance is necessary for salvation to occur (Acts 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 26:20; Luke 24:47; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Pet. 3:9). Of course, if a person changes their attitude about sin, they are certainly willing to be released from their sins by turning away from them. This is the naturally occurring inward response

of a repentant sinner. However, the demands of discipleship or the promise that a person must actually give up all of his sins, follow Christ, yield to Christ, obey His commands, become His disciple, count the cost, and do His will *in order to be saved* is not part of the conversion response to God.

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). A willingness to turn to God and be freed from sin's power is part of the Biblical and naturally occurring response of repentance ("Let the wicked forsake his way" - Isa. 55:7). *If a person is not willing to turn away from their sin they have not repented in the Biblical sense.* However, God does not require that a person must sign on the dotted line that he will actually give up all his sins (turning repentance into legalism), 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.

Many free grace teachers do not want to embrace the truth that a sinner must necessarily turn away from his sins or be *willing* to break away from sin in order to be converted. They scoff at the old-time preaching which says, "Turn or burn" (John 12:40; Acts 3:19; 28:27). They dismiss the inward turning of the conversion experience ("turn to God from idols" - 1 Thess. 1:9) out of fear that it will be viewed as earning one's salvation, or sound too similar to the lordship position which teaches that following Christ, obedience, and making Jesus Lord over one's life is necessary for conversion to take place.

The majority of present-day free grace teachers suggest that even possessing a desire or *willingness* to turn away from sin is doing something to earn or merit one's salvation. They might reason, "How willing must a person be and how much desire must they possess to free themselves from sin?" They also reason, "If a person must be willing to turn away from sin in general or some specific sin the Holy Spirit convicts him about, then this means he must actually give up these sins or sin in order to be saved. However, this is a smokescreen and becomes a misguided attempt to separate the free grace teaching from the lordship teaching.

The lordship position teaches that a person must promise to follow Christ, obey Christ, completely surrender and make Jesus Lord over his entire life forever, and become part of Christ's discipleship program so he can be saved. But God-wrought repentance (Rom. 2:4) simply impresses upon man's heart that he is a *sinner* (Rom. 3:23) which no longer wants to live in rebellion against God, that he needs a *Savior*, and that *salvation* only comes through grace (not works). 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.

Repentance is a heart preparation that brings a person to faith alone in Christ. It's not the demands of Lordship Salvation which require upfront that sinners must promise to forsake all of their sins, must submit or surrender to Christ's lordship, must turn their back on the world, must count the cost, must take up a cross, and must make Jesus Lord over their lives forever. This certainly is not the same thing as the Biblical response of repentance which involves a person being broken over his sin (Luke 15:17-19) and possessing a naturally occurring inward desire to be freed from sin which he knows offend God's holiness. **Repentance is the inward turning from sin that occurs in a sinner's heart without a list of Lordship Salvation requirements hanging over his head.**

In the lordship position a person is given the mandate that they must *forsake* all their sins, *do* something, *become* something, or *promise* something in order to be saved. However, the sinner's response of repentance is not the same as the lordship response. **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.** He freely turns away from sin and legalism, embracing Christ alone as his Savior. In repentance a person inwardly and willingly turns away from his sins to embraces Christ as his Savior order from hell and to be released (redeemed) from Satan and sin's power (Luke 11:21-22). **The lordship position makes turning to God (conversion) 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.**

In addition, this inward turning away from sin cannot be viewed as a *meritorious work* since it is part of the sinner's Biblical response to God for salvation (Acts 3:19; 20:21), and since works have nothing to do with salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). God does not view repentance or faith as a work that is done to obtain salvation but the channel by which sinners receive the free gift of salvation (Rom. 4:5; Eph. 2:8-9).

In an attempt to widen the gap between free grace and lordship teaching, some free grace teachers have abandoned the Biblical teaching on repentance as a necessary part of the sinner's response to God. If a person does not repent (change their mind and heart) that they are a sinner before God, they are not ready to place faith in Christ. Likewise, if a person does not repent or change their mind regarding atheism (there is no God) they cannot express faith in Christ for there is no God to place faith in! If a person does not repent of their works/legalistic approach to salvation, then they cannot get to faith alone in Christ.

Repentance is *Biblical* response to God's inward conviction at the time of salvation. Following and obeying Christ is a *works* response to God that comes after salvation. A sinner is not required to obey Christ, follow Christ, commit himself to Christ forever, or become a disciple of Christ in order to be saved, since this is creating a list of things a person must do in order to be saved.

The truth is this. There is a vast difference between Biblical repentance and the demands of discipleship. Seeking to become a follower or disciple of Christ is not the same as repentance. As stated above, the Biblical elements of conversion are repentance and faith (Acts 20:21) - not discipleship and Lordship. **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.**

Curtis Hutson said:
"You don't get better to get saved; you get saved to get better."

Repentance does not involve making a person into a disciple or follower of Christ. Following Christ and discipleship are the *fruits* or *results* of

repentance. Repentance simply involves an inward willingness to turn to God and break away from sin. It does not mean that a person must make promises, bargains, or contracts with God about following Him, surrendering his entire life to Him, obeying Him forever, and making Him Lord of every area in his life. This implies meriting or earning one's salvation.

Fruit and Following Christ

The issue of those who believe in Lordship Salvation is that someone who is truly saved will inevitably produce fruit which will attest to the genuineness of his faith. This is because he will have already at the time of conversion acknowledged Jesus, not only as his Savior, but as his Lord (Master) as well. In other words, to get the needed fruit from the lives of people, who are converted, a person must make Jesus Lord of his life, at the time of their conversion, and promise to obey and follow Christ.

Lordship Salvation becomes the means to the end. If a person is going to produce fruit He must follow the prescription of Lordship Salvation. However, there is no need to pusch Lordship Salvation upon people to ensure their lives will be changed and bear lasting fruit. **Making sure people bring forth fruit is not our responsibility, but the Holy Spirit's work, who takes up residency in the lives of all those who truly repent of their sins (Gal. 5:22-23).**

Here is the plain truth. If one is willing to change their attitude about sin, they will surely follow Christ <u>after</u> they are saved and bear some fruit in their lives (Eph. 2:10; John 15:1-8; Matt. 13:23). **Every Christian will bear spiritual fruit somewhere, sometime, and somehow, otherwise this person is not a believer.** Every born-again individual will be fruitful to some degree and want to follow Christ in some measure. No born-again believer will fail to bear some transformation of living. Since all Christians yield some

fruit (Rom. 6:22), they do live differently than the unsaved in some measure, even though they may not always manifest this fruit in their daily lives when expressing carnality and other sins (1 Cor. 3:1-3). However, how *much*, how *visible*, and how *often* are questions that nobody can definitively answer (Matt. 13:23).

One thing is certain. God will have something to praise every believer for on their final examination day for the Bible says, “and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4:5). Good works are the outward evidence that God is at work in a person's life, that a person is truly saved, and is following Christ (James 2:17-26). **The idea that one may believe in Christ and live his entire life unaffected by the amazing miracle of regeneration (2 Cor. 5:17), and God’s discipline (Heb. 12:6-8), is also unbiblical and a bizarre teaching.**

One extreme teaching suggests that when a person becomes a Christian he can live like the devil, engage in wicked and immoral living all his life, never change, and still go to Heaven when he dies. Those who espouse such an extreme position claim there is no relationship between saving faith and the sanctification which follows true faith. This definitely is not the case (1 John 3:6-10; 5:18-19; James 2:14-26).

The other extreme teaching suggests that every saved person will inevitably bow before the authority of Christ, submit to His lordship, and persevere in godly living to such an extent that they cannot lapse into a carnal state in their Christian life. This too is a false position (1 Cor. 3:1-3; Rom. 7:15-25; 1 Cor. 11:30-31). Consequently, those who embrace this position include the works of sanctification with the meaning or definition of faith at the time of one’s salvation. As is often the case, Biblical teaching on many subjects is found somewhere in the middle of two extremes. God’s truth must always be kept in careful balance.

An old saying goes like this:
"The pendulum swings, ridiculous extreme, bypassing the truth which lieth between."

The point is this. We don’t need to speak to unsaved people about bearing fruit, making Jesus Lord of their life, obeying Christ, and commitment to discipleship when witnessing to them in order to make sure they will bring

forth fruit after they are saved. Let's not confuse people with the results that follow all true repentance (Matt. 3:8). Just get out of the way and let poor lost sinners repent! A broken and contrite heart will always lead people to eventually break away from sin and produce a type of fruit which is connected with the new way of life (Matt. 13:23; John 15:1-6).

Many Christians today are concerned about the lack of visible fruit by those who have made decisions for Christ. Many converts show no signs that they have passed from death unto life (1 John 3:14). **As already stated, many Christians embrace the Lordship Salvation teaching as a viable option for making sure people are genuine in their conversion experience. They want to ensure that their converts "pan out" instead of "drop out."** However, the solution to the problem is not found in adding requirements to the Gospel message. Salvation is either by human effort, commitment, and works or by grace (Rom. 11:6). It cannot be by both. The one cancels out the other. In addition, we don't have to force Lordship Salvation or discipleship/mastery requirements upon unbelievers to make sure their salvation is genuine, since there will always be tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:25-30).

God expects us to share the Gospel with the lost (Mark 16:15) and tell them to express repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). The rest is up to God – not us! We don't have to force the issue of Lordship Salvation upon poor, lost, powerless sinners, or set standards for unsaved people to follow so they can be saved and be sure to bear fruit. Just allow God's grace to do a work in the hearts of lost sinners (Acts 18:27; Romans 2:4). The wonder of God's sovereign and saving grace upon the heart will get the job done! In addition, people's lives will be changed after they are saved when they experience the wonder of God's transforming grace (Titus 2:11-12). Grace changes us – not Lordship Salvation!

Christ never promised to forgive people on the basis of discipleship standards, obedience to Him, and their promise to make Him Lord of their lives forever. The account in Luke 7:36-50 portrays Christ as freely forgiving sinners without making any requests or demands upon their lives.

Luke 7:42
"And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"

The word “frankly” means that these people were forgiven graciously and freely. This is free grace! Furthermore, the message of free forgiveness, justification, and grace (Rom. 3:24) leads to a life of love, commitment, and service to the Lord. There is no need to press the issue of Lordship Salvation upon people in order to get them to change and bring forth fruit after they are saved. The message of free grace works! Fruit follows the message of free grace!

When a person changes their mind and attitude about their sin before God, they will naturally desire pardon and release from their sins. **We don’t need to set up standards of discipleship for them to follow to see if their faith and salvation are genuine.** This is legalism in disguise (Titus 3:5; 2 Tim. 1:9). Just let people repent! The fruit will follow later.

“He drew me and I followed on
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”

Or as Wesley put it:

“Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

Absolutely Free!

Salvation by grace is unmerited, unearned, and undeserved (Eph. 2:8-9). It’s set in contrast and is opposed to legalism (man’s works). This means the reception of God’s grace into one’s life is absolutely free. We should never place something on the altar beside the free offer of the grace of God. **The Bible declares that we are “justified freely by his grace” (Rom. 3:24). The adjective “free” implies no cost or work.**

Both the justification (the end result) and grace (the way to receive justification) are free (2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 4:3; 11:6) since grace is always contrasted or juxtaposed to law or works. A person is declared legally righteous in God's presence through the expression of God's unmerited and unearned grace. **If justification is a free gift, then grace must also be free in providing the gift, or else the gift could not be free.** If you give someone a gift out of the kindness and generosity of your own heart (grace), then you don't expect someone to reimburse your for the gift. Both the gift and your gracious generosity or kindness in giving the gift will cost the receiver nothing.

God's favor and kindness (grace) has been expressed to us through the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross (Rom. 5:9) so we might receive the free gift of justification before God's presence (Rom. 5:15).

Romans 8:32 states:
"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?"

Free grace is how a person is saved.

Romans 5:15-16 also declares:
"But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification."

Romans 6:23
"For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

If the gift is free, the way to get the gift is also free. You can't 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!** It costs the receiver nothing. Free grace is the only way a person can receive

the free gifts of justification (Rom. 5:15), salvation (Eph. 2:8-9), and eternal life (Rom. 6:23). If these spiritual blessings are given to us as gifts, the Giver must also provide them freely without demanding any cost on the recipient's part. Since God's grace is free, it means a person does not have to promise something to God, do something for God, or become something before God to merit or receive His grace.

"Mercy there was great, and grace was free;
Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found liberty,
At Calvary."

When a person attempts to merit God's grace they create a system of *graces*, which they must do, in order to gain God's favor. But graces are not grace! Grace is free. Grace is God reaching down to us without any human attempt to merit His favor and blessing. **Grace is God at work; works are man at work.** A personal commitment to follow Jesus Christ does not save us. Christ saves us by His grace. Personal surrender to Christ's Lordship does not save us. Christ saves us by His grace. Our ability or lack of ability to fulfill all the demands of discipleship, or following Christ, does not save us. Christ saves us by His grace.

Salvation is a *free gift* (Eph. 2:8 – "it is the gift of God"), eternal life is a *free gift* (Rom. 6:23 – "the gift of God is eternal life" and "take the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6; 22:17), God's imputed righteousness is a *free gift* (Rom. 5:17-18 - "the gift of righteousness"), justification is a *free gift* (Rom. 3:24 – "justified freely"), and forgiveness is free (Luke 7:42). **Salvation, eternal life, righteousness, justification, and forgiveness before God cannot be gifts if the recipient must promise to surrender every area of his life, as long as he lives, in order to get them!**

2 Corinthians 9:15
"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

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 tricycle 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.** Salvation is free of charge and demands no commitment or obedience since it is offered **"without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1).** There is no price tag or cost attached to the free gift of salvation.

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). J.I. Packer states, "In common honesty we must not conceal the fact that free forgiveness in one sense will cost everything; or else our evangelizing becomes a sort of confidence trick" (Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, p. 73).

Such statements as these are not only ambiguous and ludicrous but also do not measure up to Bible language. Some words just cannot be joined together in a meaningful statement. The words *free* and *cost* are two of them. **How can a gift be free and yet cost the person everything? This is like saying someone can be a loving murderer, an honest thief, or a truthful liar!** How can something be a free gift and yet cost the recipient an entire life of obedience, discipleship, good works, and following Christ to receive it? Both the dictionary and Biblical definition of the word gift defies MacArthur's teaching. If something is free there is no charge for it! There is no cost attached to it. It's just that, free!

Romans 4:4-5
"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that <u>worketh not</u>, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

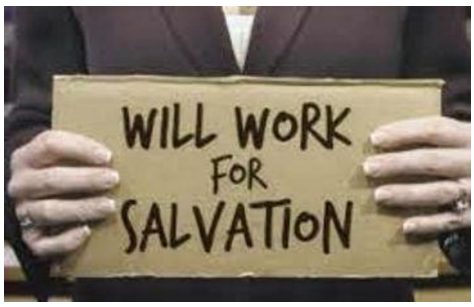
Grace is taken out of the picture when a person can do something to earn justification before God. It would be like paying back a "debt" or giving a paycheck that someone has earned. However, if a person simply places faith in Christ for the free gift of justification, God credits to their account His own legal righteousness, and they are justified in His sight. Both grace and justification are canceled if works are involved in a person's justification since grace and justification are both free gifts. Both the gift (justification) and the manner of giving (grace) are free. Free grace is the only way a person can receive a free gift.

The "free gift" teaching of the Bible regarding salvation 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! When a person promises to follow and obey Christ, make Jesus Lord of every area of his life, take up a cross, and become a disciple of Christ so God will save them, they are in essence setting up legalistic standards that must be followed or adhered to in order to be accepted before God. **It's not to him that follows Christ, who does something for Christ, becomes a disciple of Christ, or commits his whole life to Christ.** No, it's to "him that worketh not, but believeth on him." It's this person who is justified and made righteous in God's holy presence.

A person cannot believe in Christ alone for his eternal destiny and also believe that he must do something to keep it. Therefore, those who endorse Lordship Salvation cannot guarantee eternal life to those who simply believe in Christ. When a person must *do* something, *become* something, and *obey* something to be saved, salvation is no longer a free gift. This is why Lordship Salvation converts often doubt their salvation. If they have not fulfilled the contract they made at the time of conversion, they can doubt their salvation.

An aged saint, on being asked to describe salvation, aptly replied, "Something for nothing." There was another old saint who had weathered the storms for many a long year and was nearing the Heavenly harbor. After hearing this story ("Something for nothing") he exclaimed, "Yes, it's even better than that. It's everything for nothing." Nothing! Yes, nothing in my hands I bring simply to the cross I cling! Salvation is absolutely free! It's everything for nothing!

Faith and Good Works



No person reading the Bible would ever guess that Jesus' words about faith have a *cryptic understanding* to them. However, this is what Lordship Salvation teachers want us to believe when referring to saving faith. They radically redefine the meaning

of faith to fit their lordship scheme. **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.

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).

MacArthur again states:
"Let me say again unequivocally that Jesus' summons to deny self and follow him was an invitation to salvation, not….a second step of faith following salvation… Those who are not willing to lose their lives for Christ are not worthy of Him. He wants disciples willing to forsake everything. This calls for full-scale self-denial – even willingness to die for His sake if necessary" (The cost of following Discipleship – The Gospel According to Jesus).

If this were true, no person could be saved unless they were willing to die for Jesus Christ!

MacArthur simply asserts this identification of saving faith with works without demonstrating it Biblically or semantically. Lordship teachers are forced to *misread* and *misrepresent* various words (repentance, faith) and passages of Scripture (Rom. 10:9-10; James 2:14-26) to fit their theological grid.

Of course, a change in the course of one's life, the bringing forth of some fruit, will always accompany a person's faith (Eph. 2:8-10). However, MacArthur is teaching that a commitment to follow Christ is a necessary ingredient of saving faith. He is teaching that faith in Christ is not enough. A person must also, at the time of their salvation, make the commitment to follow Christ, meet the requirements of discipleship, and promise to obey

and serve Christ the rest of his days on earth. In other words, a person must promise to do something or become something in order to be saved. This is the error of Lordship Salvation.

Those who embrace Lordship Salvation are quick to use the code word "mental assent" to teach that faith is not just intellectually "believing facts" regarding Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and promise of eternal life, but that is also includes commitment and obedience to Christ. They try to reinvent and attach a new meaning to faith which includes commitment, obedience, and service to Jesus Christ. These additions give a deceptive meaning to the word faith and cause the true definition to be lost.

Saving faith does involve "believing facts" and includes personal commitment; however, it's the personal commitment of one's faith to the facts of the Gospel (the personal work of Christ) - not commitment to Christ's lordship or living the Christian life. Paul declared in 2 Timohty 1:12, "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

The theological mechanics of true Biblical faith involve a mental, emotional, and volitional response to the Gospel facts of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and promise of eternal life. However, there is no linguistic or Biblical warrant for defining faith as personal obedience, following Christ, and committing oneself to a life of discipleship and service to the Lord. There is no special definition or hidden meaning behind the word faith as the Lordship Salvation teachers suggest.

<u>Mental Assent</u> (intellectual understanding): Christ died on the cross paying the penalty for a person's sin. He was judged in their place so they can escape God's wrath and judgment. Christ also rose from the dead to prove the penalty was paid and provide the Gospel believer with eternal life (1 Cor. 15:1-4). A person must *come* to the knowledge and understanding about the Gospel facts (1 Tim. 2:4) in order to be saved (Rom. 10:14-15). Faith begins by comprehending or understanding the truth. There can be no faith without first understanding what the content of the Gospel message involves.

Emotional Element (inward conviction): A necessary part of saving faith is when a person experiences the inward conviction and movement of God in their heart which leads a person to agree with God's factual truth about the Gospel (Acts 16:14; John 16:8-11). Faith is generated by the work of God's conviction upon the human heart (Acts 2:37). This results in agreement with the truth. A person must not only intellectually understand the truth, but also come into agreement with the truth by the work of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2).

Volitional Response (moving of human will): A person now appropriates and embraces these claims for himself by transferring all of his trust to Christ's death and resurrection for salvation and eternal life (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10, 13; 2 Tim. 1:12). Many people have a general or generic faith in Jesus and God but salvational faith is when a person places their complete trust in Jesus Christ (His death and resurrection for salvation). A person might understand and agree with the truth and still fall short of salvational faith – faith that leads to their deliverance from hell. But when a person takes a step of faith to fully depend solely upon Christ as his personal Savior, this results in his salvation.

The synonyms for faith such as receiving, drinking, eating, calling, and taking all suggest there is a volitional response of the human will to the gracious propositional facts of the Gospel message and person of Christ (John 1:12; 4:14; 6:54; Rom. 10:13; Rev. 22:17). It is here where many miss salvation. A person must appropriate the substitutionary work of Christ through faith and wholly trust in Jesus Christ to be their personal Substitute and Savior (Acts 4:12). This is a commitment of their will to Christ and His saving work.

Faith involves understanding the truth about salvation (comprehension), agreeing with this truth (conviction), and then depending solely upon this truth for eternal life (commitment). The commitment is to belief – not behavior. The commitment is faith – not following. In short, believing the facts of the Gospel is all that is required for salvation. A belief that leads to the salvation of the soul involves the commitment of a person's will to Christ for salvation (John 1:12).

In other words, when a person believes in something they are willing to commit themselves to it. When a person believes in someone, they are willing to commit themselves to that person. This is the way the Bible defines Biblical belief or faith. When a person believes in the Biblical sense, they are willing to commit themselves to the facts of Christ's death and resurrection for their salvation, His factual promise of eternal life through the claims of the Gospel, and embrace Christ as his Savior, taking the free offer of God's gift of eternal life. How wonderful! We appropriate a gift that is absolutely free.

Jesus said in John 11:26
"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Acts 16:31
"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ..."

How simple. Paul never said a person must obey, make Jesus Lord of their life, count the cost, take up a cross, becomes a disciple, persevere, and thou shalt be saved. The thing the sinner is told to do is believe. Only believe!

MacArthur writes: "A concept of faith that excludes obedience corrupts the message of salvation" (Gospel According to Jesus, p. 174). **I would change the quote to make it Biblical: "A concept of faith that <u>includes</u> obedience corrupts the message of salvation."** This is because salvation has nothing to do with the promise of obedience (Titus 3:5). If we will just believe or place our complete trust or confidence in Christ's death, resurrection, and His promise of eternal life, then we will be saved.

<u>Lordship Salvation Premise:</u> We are to have faith to be saved (Eph. 2:8). Faith includes "obedience" and "commitment." Therefore, in order to be saved we must commit our lives to the lordship of Christ, obey Him, serve Him, and become a disciple and follower of Christ.

The Bible does teach that a person must commit his faith and very soul to Christ in order to be saved.

2 Timothy 1:12
"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Charles Ryrie said:
"Trust, however, implies reliance, commitment, and confidence in the object or truths that one is trusting. An element of commitment must be present in trusting Christ for salvation, but it is commitment to Him, His promise, and His ability to give eternal life to those who believe."

There is a commitment of one's faith to Christ and His promise of eternal life that is necessary for salvation. Faith in Christ has nothing to do with a commitment to following Christ or good works. At the time of one's conversion a person must commit their soul to the Savior, but they are not required to commit their obedience, discipleship, and service to Him in order to be saved. No person is ever called upon to make a commitment to following Christ, surrender his whole life to Christ, and promise to serve Christ the rest of his days on earth in order to receive eternal life.

Some lordship proponents have tried to misconstrue how a sinner responds to God. Since God commands people to repent and express faith some have suggested that this obedient response to God must also include a requirement to obey and follow Christ. This is misleading and not what the Bible teaches. We do know that the repentance and faith which results in salvation are essentially obedient responses to God since God commands everyone to repent and believe in Christ. Acts 17:30-31 says that "God commandeth all men every where to repent" while Jesus states in John 6:29: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he that sent."

It must be understood that repentance and faith is the <u>Biblical response</u> to Christ's offer of salvation. Therefore, this response to God is never viewed as a meritorious work (Rom. 4:5; Eph. 2:8-9). However, making Jesus Lord of one's life, obeying Him, and transforming the life in order to be saved is never seen in Scripture to be a Biblical response to Christ's offer of salvation (John 7:37-38), or what God requires for conversion (Acts 20:21). Therefore, making promises to follow Christ, obey Him, and become His

disciple are actually forms of legalistic works which a person places along side of his faith (Gal. 3:2-3) in order to merit God's approval (Luke 18:9).

The simple truth is this. Refusal to trust or believe in Christ for salvation is disobedience to God's clear command ("And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" - John 5:40). Christ is calling people to repentance (Luke 5:32) and faith (John 6:47) but unless people heed or obey the call they cannot receive the free gift of salvation. Every person must respond to Christ through repentance and faith in order to be saved (John 1:12). Willful rejection of God's Gospel revelation and invitation is called disobedience to the Gospel ("obey not the gospel" - 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).

The only act of obedience to the Gospel message is a person's obedient response of belief in this message. Therefore, to disobey the Gospel obviously means that one fails to embrace by faith the message of salvation through Christ's death and resurrection. The Gospel message must be obeyed and there is only one way to obey it by expressing faith in the content or message of the Gospel. **Obeying the Gospel does not refer to obeying Christ but obeying what Christ asks a sinner to do in order to be saved – believe (John 6:47).**

This obedient response to Christ and the Gospel message is called the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Acts 6:7). **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. 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. 1:22; 2:7).

Someone once said:
"The only thing you can do without doing anything is believe."

The sinner's obedient faith at the time of his conversion is non-meritorious but commanding that a sinner must follow and obey Christ is not part of the conversion response and therefore becomes a meritorious work on the person's behalf. Here is the point. **The obedience of faith which is placed in Christ <u>for</u> initial salvation (John 6:29) has nothing to do with the obedience that comes <u>after</u> salvation (James 2:17, 26).** To conclude that a person's obedient faith at the time of their salvation means that they must also obey and follow Christ 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 involves trusting in Christ – not following Christ. Learning and obeying are not <u>prerequisites</u> to salvation; they are the <u>products</u> of salvation.**

Ephesians 1:12 says, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." **Faith involves trusting in Christ to be one's Savior (Gal. 3:26) – not following Christ.** To equate faith with following Christ is to make faith something that it is not. Fruit follows faith (Eph. 2:8-10) but it is not part of faith (Rom. 4:5). Faith is the hand of the heart reaching out to Christ for salvation. It does not involve stepping out to follow Christ. When I express faith in Christ, I am trusting in *who* Christ is (God), *why* Christ died and rose again (to pay sin's penalty and provide assurance that we are accepted in God's presence), and *what* Christ has promised (the free gift of eternal life) in order to bring salvation into my life.

Sanctification is not part of the conversion experience. However, Lordship Salvation proponents redefine the Biblical meaning of faith (trust or reliance) into a works-type of faith that must immediately produce the fruit of sanctification in order for a person's faith to be genuine. Therefore, a person is challenged to follow and obey Christ in order to be saved.

Lordship teaching gives an automatic relationship between saving faith and sanctification. They claim that all true faith is a faith that works. Of course, this is true in relationship to the result of faith (James 2:17), but the result of faith (works) is not part of the Biblical definition or meaning of faith, nor is the result of faith (works) part of the person's response to Christ for salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

Faith is only one thing – belief or trust in Christ alone for salvation (Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8; Col. 1:4). To mix works with faith under the disguise of following Christ, making Jesus Lord of your life, becoming a discipleship, counting the cost, and taking up a cross with the definition or meaning of faith is a theological blunder of the worst sort. **Lordship advocates attempt to make behavior and fruit (good works) essential <u>ingredients</u> of saving faith rather than the <u>evidence</u> of saving faith.** Many base this finding upon a key verse in James 2:22: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"

Lordship Salvation advocates use this statement in Scripture to teach that even saving faith must include works, commitment, obedience, or following Christ. However, this is an exegetical fallacy. James was teaching the **EVIDENCE** of genuine faith and justification – not the **WAY** a person expresses faith in Christ or the manner in which they are justified before God. **Works are not <u>part</u> of faith (Eph. 2:8-9); they <u>follow</u> faith (Eph. 2:10).** James argues that both faith in Christ and justification before God are proven by the transformation of a person's life. **Works <u>confirm</u> faith and justification, but they are not <u>part</u> of faith and justification (Rom. 4:6 – "God imputeth righteousness without works").** Even James comes to this conclusion.

James 2:23 declares:
"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

If obedience, works, lordship, discipleship, and following Christ are part of one's faith at the time of salvation, then dedication and obedience become necessary for a person's justification before God. The Bible says we are "justified by faith" (Rom. 5:1) and we are "justified freely" (Rom. 3:24). No

amount of obedience is required to bring a person into a justified position before God or keep them justified before God. Obedience to Christ's commands (human works) has nothing to do with a person's justification before God.

Galatians 2:16
"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Blessed noonday truth!

One must understand that many Lordship Salvation teachers are "five-point" Calvinists which teach that regeneration *precedes* faith. Their theology dictates that a person must be regenerated (born again) so they can believe instead of believing in order to be regenerated (born again). Some Calvinists teach a person must be saved before he can believe. This is because a person is dead and can do nothing without the reception of God's life (Eph. 2:1-2). Therefore, God must first implant life before a person's human will can be changed and before they can actively do something (believe or express faith in Christ).

The Calvinistic message is a person must be saved in order to believe – not believe in order to be saved. Here is the gist of what they teach. Since a sinner is born again before expressing faith in Christ, Lordship salvation proponents additionally teach that a person can express an obedient faith in Christ, at their time of his conversion, without that faith being legalistic works, since the person is already born again or saved. In other words, a person who has already been regenerated will express a type of faith in Christ that wants to become His discipleship or follower, a faith that wants to surrender and commit itself to Christ, which in return becomes a *necessary immediate proof* to demonstrate that one's faith is genuine.

Some Calvinists come to this bizarre conclusion. Since a person is already regenerated before they express faith in Christ, their works of discipleship/master/commitment to Christ which prove the genuine

character of their faith are no longer legalistic works done to save them, but sanctifying works related to the Christian life. Of course, these are unbiblical conclusions. First, Scriptural teaching conforms that regeneration does not precede faith (1 John 5:1; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:13; Heb. 10:39 – "them that believe to the saving of the soul"). These verses clearly teach that salvation and regeneration are the *result* of believing – not the *cause* of believing. How can a person be saved before they believe? This is theological nonsense! It's "believe" and "thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31) – not "Thou shalt be saved" and "believe."

Second, the proof or the genuineness of one's faith comes after salvation (2 Pet. 1:10) and not during a person's conversion.

Third, the practical sanctification of the Christian life has nothing to do with a person's salvation or justification before God (2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5; Rom. 5:1). **It would be more Biblical and proper to talk about "Lordship Sanctification" instead of "Lordship Salvation."** This is because sanctification has to do with living the Christian life. **Lordship Salvation mixes the <u>sanctification</u> of the believer with the <u>salvation</u> of lost sinners. It promotes <u>behavior</u> with <u>belief</u> and <u>reformation</u> with <u>regeneration</u>.**

Many Calvinistic writers teach that *good works are one with the expression of a person's faith*, so much so, that works become a necessary part of saving faith and salvation. Since only good works can confirm genuine faith the strict Calvinist contends that a person can't be saved without good works. Therefore, embracing Lordship Salvation teaching is common among Calvinists. Of course, the Bible does not endorse this teaching. Faith and works are always contrasted or juxtaposed in Scripture (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:5) and works have nothing to do with a person's faith or salvation before God. **Faith is not a work; it is ceasing from work (Gal. 2:16). God is not looking for fruit when it comes to salvation. He is looking for faith.**

William Pettingill used to say:
"By grace through faith plus nothing."

People who are lost were not pressed by Jesus to become a disciple in order to be saved. This would contradict what Jesus said to Nicodemus (John 3:7).

Jesus said, "Ye must be born again" – He did not say "Ye must follow me." **We are born free!** Jesus taught that a person enters the kingdom by new birth (John 3:3); however, a person's commitment to following Christ or change of conduct becomes the evidence of his salvation. **Discipleship is not <u>part</u> of one's salvation but the <u>proof</u> of salvation.**

Good works will to some degree <u>follow</u> faith (James 2:17-20) but they are not <u>part</u> of faith (Eph. 2:8-9). **A changed life is the <u>sign</u> that we are saved; it is not the <u>way</u> that we are saved.** Changed living gives evidence that we are already saved but it does not become part of faith or the path to salvation. Faith is only one thing – reliance or trust in Jesus Christ for one's salvation. Those who embrace the lordship salvation model turn the simplicity of faith and Christ's statements regarding belief into obscurity.

Jesus said in John 3:14-16:
"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him (Christ who was lifted up on the cross) should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The simplicity of what Jesus taught about faith can never be undone by any would-be teacher of our present generation. The children of Israel only had to look upon the serpent on the pole to live (Numb. 25:1-3). They did not have to promise they would serve God the rest of their wilderness journeys. They did not have to follow a blueprint for Christian living. The look was all that God required. In a similar way, all a person must do to be saved today is look to Christ who was lifted up on the cross to bear the penalty and punishment for his sins.

"Lifted up was He to die!
It is finished was His cry!"

This simple look of faith at the crucified Christ on Calvary will produce the result of salvation.

John 6:40
"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

John MacArthur, in his attempt to teach Lordship Salvation has turned looking into crawling! He states: "In order to look at the bronze snake on the pole, they had to drag themselves to where they could see it. They were in no position to glance flippantly at the pole and then proceed with their lives of rebellion" (The Gospel According to Jesus, p. 49).

If mastery/lordship/discipleship were an actual requirement for being saved then the salvation verses that Jesus shared were incomplete, misleading, or wrong. Faith has always been just one thing – trust or reliance upon Christ for salvation. Salvational faith (the faith that results in salvation) has nothing to do with following or commitment to Christ. Nothing can be added to the simple message of faith alone in Christ for salvation. The mechanics of saving faith are not confusing. **When a person believes in Christ they will mentally, emotionally, and volitionally embrace the claims of Jesus Christ, believing that He died and rose again from the dead to give him eternal life.** Faith can best be explained as a look to the Savior. If you want to be saved, then just look to Christ for salvation and you will be saved!

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."

"I've a message from the Lord, hallelujah!
The message unto you I'll give;
'Tis recorded in His Word, hallelujah!
It is only that you "look and live.

Look and live, my brother live!
Look to Jesus now and live,
'Tis recorded in His Word, hallelujah!
It is only that you "look and live."

A Promise or Performance?

Lordship salvation confuses believers and makes them doubt their salvation. This is because the Lordship Salvation teaching places too much

emphasis on a person's obedience or perseverance (performance) in works instead of believing in Christ's promise of eternal life (John 6:47).

John Phillips said:
"If salvation is based on trying, then it is not based on trusting."

A person's salvation and eternal life is based upon faith in God's promise of eternal life (1 John 5:11-13; John 3:16) - not faith in one's discipleship, commitment and obedience to Christ, perseverance, or outward performance of living. Because of the *overemphasis* placed upon good works with a person's faith the Calvinistic Lordship Salvation view concerning salvation actually becomes a works approach to a person's acceptance before God. Obedience is seen to be part of faith, and a needed ingredient to make a person's faith valid or real, even at the time of their salvation.

Calvinists conclude that it's "faith alone in Christ alone" only when our faith in Christ, at the time of salvation, includes a decision to follow Christ's plan for discipleship, surrender our lives completely to Christ's lordship or mastery, obey Christ's commands, promise to give up our sins forever, persevere, and live for Christ the rest of our days on earth. *This teaching actually frontloads the Gospel with legalistic works (Titus 3:5).* Then, after we are saved, we are told by Lordship Salvation teachers that we must continually and intricately examine ourselves to make sure we are staying faithful to Christ and doing good works in order to confirm that our faith and salvation were genuine. *This teaching essentially backloads the Gospel with legalistic works (Gal. 3:3).*

What a terrible departure from faith alone in Christ's promise of eternal life (John 4:14). **If I do not believe that I am saved at this very moment, it's because I do not believe the offer and promise that God has made to me regarding eternal life.** Of course, those who embrace Lordship Salvation do not doubt that God will keep His promise of eternal life, but they wonder whether they have properly fulfilled the conditions for being heirs to this promise. They signed on the dotted line at the time of their salvation and

checked off the boxes regarding discipleship and following Christ, but when they veer away from their original commitment, they doubt their salvation.

The *primary confirmation* and *foundation* of one's assurance of salvation is to be **objective truth** which is the promise of eternal life that Jesus gave to everyone who believes on Him (John 6:47; 11:25-26; 1 John 5:1, 11-13). We are to have an unconditional certainty, based upon Christ's promise, that we possess eternal life through simple faith in Him. Instead of clinging to the *promise* of eternal life (1 John 5:10-13) many are clinging to the *condition* of their own lives for their assurance of salvation. Lordship Salvation teaching does not promote assurance but doubt when it comes to a person's salvation.

MacArthur writes that "Genuine assurance" does not come "from clinging to the memory of some experience" (Gospel According to Jesus, p. 23) in order to stress that a person should not merely look back to when they placed faith in Christ for salvation. This statement leads people astray. **A person's salvation experience is based upon the promise of God's Word in relationship to when they "first trusted in Christ" (Eph. 1:12) as their personal Savior (John 1:12; Rom. 10:13).** The transfer of faith to Christ should be the basis of one's assurance (John 3:16). A person may not remember the exact time when they placed initial faith in Christ for salvation. However, they should base the assurance of their salvation upon the fact that they are trusting in Christ and His promise of eternal life (John 3:36; 6:40).

The **secondary confirmation** of one's assurance of salvation is to be a **subjective examination** of one's life (2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 2:3, 9-11; 3:9, 14). Examining one's life is the outgrowth of the assurance we already have in Christ; it is not the basis for our assurance. Too much emphasis on the secondary subjective examination of works leads to doubt, discouragement, and despair regarding one's salvation. If a person only looks at their works, without looking to Christ, they cannot have the confident realization or absolute assurance they possess eternal life. **Many today are trying to find assurance in the wrong place!** Once again, instead of clinging to the promise of eternal life (1 John 5:10-13) many are clinging to the condition of their own lives for their assurance of salvation.

The object of our faith is to be in a Person - not in our performance. John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The litmus test for our salvation is the Lamb. **We do not believe by looking at works; we believe by looking at Christ. I must look to Calvary (John 3:15-16) and not the condition of my life to have the assurance of salvation.** We must look to the Lamb of God instead of our life if we want to have the assurance of salvation. **When we overemphasize the quality of one's faith, we begin to de-emphasize the object of one's faith.** Therefore, when a person's faith centers upon their performance instead of Christ, they will eventually lack the assurance of their salvation. This is because their view of salvation becomes man-centered instead of Christ-centered (Gal. 6:14).

Let us remember that the object of a person's faith ("faith in Christ Jesus" – Gal. 3:26) determines the value of a person's faith ("thy faith has saved thee" - Luke 7:50) and also generates assurance ("full assurance of faith" - Heb. 10:22). Therefore, we are to possess faith in Christ (Rom. 3:22; Col. 1:4; 2 Tim. 3:15) and not our good works. **When Christ is the focus of our faith then assurance will follow.** Furthermore, we must remember that in the matter of salvation, what God looks at and sees is most important. In Exodus 12:13 God says, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." God did not say "when I see your works, I will pass over you." God looks at Christ's blood as the ground for our pardon and forgiveness (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

The point is this. Only after a person's faith rests solely upon Christ, and His promise of eternal life, should one examine his life and see the glorious changes that God is accomplishing, through His transforming grace (Titus 2:11-12; 2 Cor. 3:18). The changes or new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) provide a *secondary confirmation* that a person has received the precious gift of eternal life. But the primary assurance of every Gospel believer is Jesus' promise of eternal life (John 6:47) and the Gospel (Christ's death and resurrection) for it is the "gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13)

Lordship salvation teachers feel that if one's primary assurance is not conditioned on good works that a person is more likely to sin. Therefore, to keep a person looking at his perseverance in good works as the primary way to receive assurance leaves him more responsible and accountable to

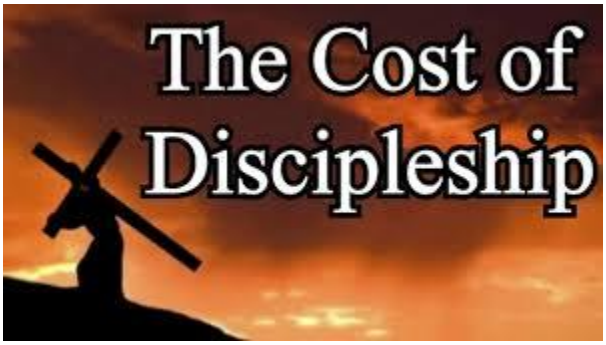
God. However, we must remember that the working of God's grace in a person's heart does not stimulate sin but actually frees people from sin and promotes righteous and victorious living (Rom. 6:1-14; Titus 2:11-12). Grace never leaves a man where it finds him!

Here is the bottom line. The general examination of one's life (2 Cor. 13:5) should not be turned into a legalistic exercise to determine a person's salvation and eternal destiny. But with a broad stroke of the paint brush, we can move across the canvas of our lives and see that God has entered our lives and made a difference. We may not be all that God wants us to be but praise God we are not what we used to be!

"Something beautiful, something good
All my confusion He understood.
All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife
But he made something beautiful of my life."

The Cost of Discipleship

Lordship Salvation Premise: We must become a disciple or follower of Christ in order to be saved. Discipleship demands all. Therefore, in order to be saved, we must give all to Christ (our life, obedience, commitment, service, time, treasure, etc.).



This is what Lordship Salvation teachers essentially believe and promote. However, it is a false proposition built upon sinking sand. Taking up a cross daily (Luke 9:23) and the other credentials of discipleship (Luke 14:26-27) have nothing to do with a person's actual salvation and acceptance before God (2 Cor. 5:21). Following Christ and transformation of living is the outward evidence or proof of one's salvation (Heb. 12:14; Titus 1:16). **Salvation means coming to the cross and believing in Christ (1 Cor. 1:18), while discipleship means carrying the cross and following Christ (Mark 8:34).**

If a person is required to follow Christ and all the credentials of discipleship as a daily prerequisite or requirement for salvation, then nobody could know they were saved. In fact, salvation would be nothing more than a legalistic quest to make oneself acceptable before God on the basis of human effort. The Bible clearly condemns legalism (Rom. 3:21-22; Gal. 5:1-4). The leaven of legalism, even in a small amount, will sour the Biblical teaching of grace ("A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" - Gal. 5:9).

Salvation is by grace – not by discipleship (Eph. 2:8-9). A commitment to discipleship is the **ratification** of one's salvation but it does not become a **requirement** for salvation (Rom. 3:28). This is because no person has ever been a perfect disciple or follower of Christ nor can one merit God's approval by any degree of commitment (Titus 3:5; Isa. 64:6). Salvation from the penalty of sin is a finished transaction (Acts 16:31) but discipleship is a daily routine (Luke 9:23 – "daily"). Deliverance from the penalty of sin is accomplished the moment a person believes in Christ (John 1:12; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:13; Eph. 1:13; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:39) whereas discipleship and sanctification is a lifelong process (1 Thess. 4:3-4; Phil. 2:12-13). **Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) while discipleship is by following Christ through commitment (Mark 8:34).**

Now think about this. If a person must become a disciple or follower Christ in order to be saved, then what about deathbed conversions and the thief on the cross? The thief on the cross could not promise a life of commitment to God. He could not promise that he would serve God the rest of his days on earth for he was about to die. In fact, the thief on the cross could not even walk and aisle or raise a hand. Both his hands and feet were fastened to a cross! The thief could not be baptized. The cross would only float! Did the thief promise anything to Christ? No. Did Jesus demand anything of him? No.

God never says to the unsaved man, "Come after me for salvation." He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (John 11:28). The simple truth is this. **A person must first "come" to Christ (Matt. 11:28; 22:17) before he can "come after" Christ (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23).** The lordship teaching fails to distinguish salvation from discipleship and makes requirements for discipleship a prerequisite for

salvation. Jesus distinguished the two (salvation and discipleship). He first spoke about inviting people to a free banquet. They could come without cost. He said in Luke 14:17, "Come, for all things are now ready" and in Luke 14:23 he declared, "compel them to come in." There are no strings attached. No price needed to be paid. A person only needed to come.

It's interesting that afterward Jesus taught the credentials and cost associated with discipleship (Luke 14:25-33). So here is the point. The "poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" (Luke 14:21) have nothing to give but they can freely come to the banquet ("freely ye have received, freely give" – Matt. 10:8). People can come to the banquet of salvation and enter the kingdom without price or cost. However, the call to discipleship has a price tag attached to it. Salvation is free but dedicated and committed discipleship is costly for everyone who wants to wholeheartedly follow Christ. **It cost nothing to become a Christian, but it cost something to be a dedicated disciple or follower of Christ.** It may cost us fame, fortune, and family. It will certainly bring us opposition and may cost us our very own lives. The house of discipleship will not be nearly as full as the banquet room!

There are three reasons why Jesus taught discipleship.

- To teach dedication to His cause

Jesus presented the credentials of discipleship to His personal followers to teach them the importance of dedication to His cause (Matt. 16:21-27; Luke 9:23; 14:25-27). If a saved person is truly a committed follower of Christ, he will take up a cross "daily" (Luke 9:23), wholeheartedly follow Jesus Christ, and make Him lord of his life. Christ's plan for discipleship has not changed. Christ's teaching on discipleship included **surrender** ("deny himself"), **sacrifice** ("take up his cross"), **submission** or obedience ("follow me"), and a **superiority** of love ("hateth and loveth") which means to love Christ more than anyone else or anything else in life (Luke 9:23; 14:27-35).

It's important to realize that Jesus linked reward with faithful discipleship–not salvation.

Matthew 16:27
"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Reward was to be a motive for following and serving Christ. Even Paul realized this under the Grace Dispensation (1 Cor. 9:24-27). Why did Christ present dedicated discipleship with the prospect of eternal reward? It's because not everyone who embraces Christ as Savior would become the kind of radical disciple or follower of Christ that He spoke about (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 3:1-3; 11:29-31; 2 Tim. 4:10, 16; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; 2 Pet. 2:7; Ezek. 3:20). Disciples come in all shapes and sizes and are at different levels of commitment in the process of growth and sanctification (2 Pet. 3:18).

Some disciples did not confess Christ (John 12:42), some followed Christ secretly (John 19:38), and others forsook Him at the time of His approaching death (Matt. 26:56). Even true converts in the school of discipleship can lack commitment and dedication. However, following Christ should be a believer's loving response to His sacrificial death on their behalf (John 14:15, 23; Rom. 14:7-9; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 4:19; 5:2).

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Or as someone else wrote:

"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!"

- To warn about the danger of false profession

While speaking about discipleship Christ presents truths that relate to both believers (possessors of salvation) and unbelievers (professors of salvation). A person is not required to become a disciple in order to be saved. On the other hand, a person that totally rejects Christ's authority, who refuses to follow Christ in some measure, and manifests no life-changing fruit or transformation, cannot be saved. When a person totally repudiates

discipleship and Christ's authority over his life, he is an imposter who does not possess genuine salvation.

The old saying is still true:
"There are many professors but few possessors."

Christ also addressed larger crowds when speaking about the matter of discipleship or following Christ (Mark 8:34; Luke 6:17) in order to warn people about the danger of false profession and losing one's soul because of a wrong relationship with Him (Matt 16:26; Mark 8:36-37). Of the original 12 apostles, only one, Judas Iscariot, fell into the latter category (John 6:64). Judas betrayed Christ for money and lost his own soul!

Jesus was speaking about superficially following Him without any real attachment to Him (John 15:1-6). A person who does not make any *genuine* initiative to follow Christ, and who does not manifest any *true* or *lasting* godly fruit in their lives, demonstrates he is not saved (Matt. 3:10; 6:15-18 13:22; 24:45-49; 25:24-25) and in the end will be judged by Christ at His Second Coming (Matt. 3:12; 6:19; 24:50-51; 25:26-30, 41, 46).

Some within the crowds who followed Christ (John 6:60 – "Many therefore of his disciples") claimed to believe in Him but were not true disciples for Jesus taught in John 6:64 that "there are some of you that believe not." Some made the outward profession that they believed in Christ, but Jesus did not believe in them (John 2:23-25; 6:26, 66; Acts 8:13-23; Matt. 7:21-23). They were following Christ out of wrong motives and for the wrong reasons. However, Christ allowed them to superficially follow Him since He loved them and wanted them to embrace Him as their Savior (1 Tim. 2:3-4).

In Matthew 16:25-26 and Mark 8:35-37 Jesus is giving a warning to those who claim to be a follower of Christ but never demonstrate any change in their conduct, behavior, or manner of living. When a person desires to repeatedly "**save his life**" (vs. 25a) from the hardship or suffering that is associated with discipleship, when he fails to follow Christ and repudiates Christ's authority over his life, this becomes an indicator that one will "**lose his life**" or end up being judged for his sins as an unbeliever. *Every person who is born again will bear some fruit that is related to regeneration*.

Where there is no fruit there can be no life and the end result will mean judgment.

Jesus taught in Matthew 3:10:
"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

He adds in Matthew 7:19:
"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

Matthew 12:33
"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit."

When a person only manifests rotten fruit, they prove that they do not have the life of God flowing though them. The end result of those who bear no fruit is judgment (John 15:6).

In the context of Christ's presentation of discipleship, He refers to the danger of false profession as He so often does in His kingdom teachings. Losing one's life involves a terrible end in relationship to the unbeliever. It means to experience judgment and great spiritual loss under the hand of God's righteous judgment (Rom. 2:5).

Matthew 16:25 ("shall lose it") can best be explained by Matthew 16:26 when Jesus said: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In other words, a person can possess great material gain or fame in this world but what value is this in comparison to losing one's soul in hell? What can a person actually give in exchange for the value of his soul? Money, material things, and marked fame which men receive in this life for their worldly pursuits may seem to be something wonderful, but they are certainly no trade-off for a soul in hell (Luke 16:23-24).

In other similar kingdom texts, a person is said to "**save it**" (Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24) and "**preserve it**" (Luke 17:33) when they choose to lose their life by

following Christ in discipleship, hardship, and even death. The context is talking about saving one's life from God's judgment in contrast to losing one's life in judgment. A man can refuse to follow Christ, gain the fortunes of the world, and lose his own soul. However, a person who follows Christ and lives for Him demonstrates his salvation before God and will be saved from future judgment. He will preserve it for entrance into the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 13:43). Once again, the **WAY** of salvation is not being taught by Christ but the **FRUIT** that comes from salvation. Christ argues from the perspective of fruit to prove a person's salvation. He is not teaching the means of salvation.

The point is this. Although one does not need to become a disciple of Christ in order to be saved (Luke 14:17, 23), a truly saved person will not completely reject Christ's authority over his life. A person will attempt to connect and commit himself to Christ in some ways, even though he may not become the kind of radical disciple that Jesus taught about in the gospel accounts. Those who make no attempt to follow Christ, completely ignore Christ's plan for discipleship, and refuse His authority over their lives while claiming to be saved (Matt. 16:25a) are nothing more than tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:25). In the end, they will be judged as an unbeliever for not doing God's will and true service (Matt. 7:21-23; 24:45-51; 25:24-30, 46). They will lose their lives by experiencing God's wrath and judgment in the next life.

Matthew 3:12 declares:
"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The contexts of all the discipleship verses in the gospel accounts have one general thought. They present the *danger of false profession* which leads to ultimate judgment when Jesus returns as the King. **In one sense, people can save their necks in this life but lose their souls in the next life!** When a person is counterfeit, when they exhibit no marked pattern of discipleship, when they show no commitment to Christ's cause, or manifest any change in their unrighteous patterns of living and outward conduct, they demonstrate they are not genuinely saved.

The danger of false profession is everywhere! Even Jesus had a Judas! There are those who claim to be following Christ and doing the works of Christ but are actually ignoring Him and His will for their lives (Matt. 7:21). As a result, their fruits or overall manner of living and conduct repeatedly witness against them.

Matthew 7:20
"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Titus 1:16 puts it this way:
"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him,* being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."
In the context of false profession Christ says He would one day return to establish His kingdom and be ashamed of those who are imposters which have lived a shameful life and assimilated with a wicked generation.

Mark 8:38
"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Christ will also refuse to confess before the Father those who are not His children.

Matthew 10:32-33
"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

In the context of Second Coming verses, Christ will refuse to confess before the Father those who are imposters, who are not His children, and who have demonstrated this by their wayward living and failure to place themselves under His authority.

Matthew 7:23 records Christ's refusal to confess false professors before the Father in more vivid detail: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." There are many people who live for themselves and yet claim to live and follow Christ at the same time.

Jesus says that this cannot be so. Many are too busy living for themselves and doing their will instead of the Father's will (Matt. 7:21). These people are not true redeemed followers of Christ in spite of what they might say. In fact, Christ says that He never knew these kinds of people as His own children.

Luke 13:27
"But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

- To direct people to Christ

Lordship Salvation Premise: The rich young ruler wanted to know how to have eternal life. Christ demanded that he follow Him and give up all his wealth. Therefore, in order to be saved, we must promise to follow and obey Christ and give Him total control over all of our lives forever.

Luke 18:18-25 gives the Biblical narrative:
"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

In the above reference, Christ's teaching on the Mosaic Law coupled with discipleship was designed to demonstrate false profession, and on this occasion, it was used to teach a sinner of his lost estate before God. The rich young ruler thought he could do something to inherit eternal life ("what shall I do to inherit eternal life" – Luke 18:18). Christ brought

conviction upon this particular man, who thought he was a righteous person, by presenting the requirements of the Mosaic Law and discipleship.

"Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich."

Is the Lord telling this person that he must actually give up everything that he has in order to go to Heaven? Let us hope not, for if this is the requirement for going to Heaven, none of us will make it! Of course, one cannot gain eternal life by giving away all their money (Isa. 55:1; Rom. 6:23). This is not what Christ was implying by His statement. Jesus was using the Law in a lawful way (1 Tim. 1:8-9) to try and get this young man to face the fact that he was a sinner (Rom. 3:20), who was covetous, and who had broken the Law (Ex. 20:17). This man had placed the god of money - Ex. 20:3) before the true God.

After hearing the law's requirement and Christ's credentials of true discipleship ("come, follow me" – Luke 18:22) the rich man recognized his own sinfulness. Jesus reminds the disciples that those who "trust in uncertain riches" (1 Tim. 6:17) are not easy converts for entrance into the kingdom of God (Luke 18:24-25). Using a hyperbole (exaggerated statement) he reasons that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a sewing needle then for a rich man to enter the messianic earthly kingdom.

Riches have a way of keeping people from seeing their need for Jesus Christ and His salvation. In essence, the Lord explains to His disciples why He told the rich man to sell all his goods and follow Christ. It was because this man's heart was filled with covetousness, and he was trusting in his riches for salvation instead of Christ. The man needed to realize his sinfulness and transfer His trust from earthly riches to Christ.

Christ never presented the credentials of discipleship as a requirement for salvation but to demonstrate to His followers what real and radical discipleship involved, to expose the sinfulness of unsaved people, their false

profession and relationship with Himself, their lost estate before God, and need for repentance and grace.

The Good News of the Gospel

John MacArthur wrote:
"The Gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow Him in submissive obedience, not just a plea to make a decision or pray a prayer."

MacArthur has turned the good news into bad news! Of course, nobody is saved by merely praying a prayer. However, people do call out in prayer to transfer their faith to Christ (Luke 18:13; Rom. 10:13). Furthermore, faith in Christ alone is a decision that takes place in the heart of man (Rom. 10:10). It's a decision that people make at one point of their lives (Acts 8:37; 16:31; 26:18; Rom. 4:3; Eph. 1:13; 2:8; Rom. 10:13; Luke 7:50; 2 Tim. 1:9). The transaction of salvation happens at a given point of time (Acts 3:19; John 3:7; Eph. 2:5).

"Took of the offer, of grace He did proffer,
He saved me, O praise His dear name!"

MacArthur's point that "The Gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow Him in submissive obedience" is simply unbiblical and erroneous. As stated above, the Gospel according to MacArthur actually frontloads the Gospel with legalistic requirements for salvation and makes discipleship, following, obedience, service, and submission part of the actual content of the Gospel. **Lordship Salvation**

proponents actually rewrite the Gospel message 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.

The Gospel according to Jesus is the Gospel that Jesus gave to Paul ("that which I also received" – 1 Cor. 15:3). Paul received it from Christ, so it must be His Gospel. Therefore, what we read in First Corinthians is the Gospel according to Jesus and Paul which centered on the message of free forgiveness in Christ (Luke 4:18). The text of Scripture in 1 Corinthians 15:3 declares that Christ died for our sins (bearing sin's penalty), was buried (proving the finality of His death) and rose again the third day (confirming that the Father had accepted His payment for sin). This is the Gospel according to the Bible; however, it's not the Gospel according to those who embrace Lordship Salvation teaching.

To try and claim that the Gospel is something other than Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is to misstate what the Bible clearly confirms regarding the Gospel message. There is no other Gospel (Gal. 1:9) but the one shared by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. Christ certainly did not preach another saving Gospel during His earthly ministry (John 3:15-16). There was no other Gospel preached by the apostles but this Gospel.

In an article entitled, "What is the Gospel," by Harry Ironside, he states: "The Gospel is not a call to repentance, or to amendment of our ways, to make restitution for past sins, or to promise to do better in the future. These things are proper in their place, but they do not constitute the Gospel; for the Gospel is not good advice to be obeyed, it is good news to be believed. Do not make the mistake then of thinking that the Gospel is a call to duty or a call to reformation, a call to better your condition, to behave yourself in a more perfect way than you have been doing in the past."

The Gospel (good news) is what Christ did for us (1 Cor. 15:1-4) - not what man can do for Christ. The message of man's commitment to following

Christ, obedience, and making Jesus Lord of his life has nothing to do with the content of the Gospel message. To include the message of discipleship as part of the content of the Gospel message is a terrible distortion of the Gospel. It is a perversion and false addition to the Gospel (Gal. 1:7). **If a person's obedience is part the Gospel message, then the Gospel would no longer be good news; it would be bad news!**

Let's state the Biblical truth in a simple fashion. **The Gospel message does not include settling the issues that belong to the Christian life. The Gospel is the announcement of what Christ has done for us - not what we can do for Him. The Gospel has absolutely nothing to do with the submission or surrender of people!** Of course, the Bible speaks about "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). However, this is man's response to God and has nothing to do with the actual content of the Gospel message. **Man's conversion or response is completely separate from the Gospel message.** Nor does man's response (repentance and faith) have anything to do with a commitment to following Christ and making Him Lord over every area of one's life.

Through the Gospel Christ offers something to me. I do not offer anything to Christ in order to fulfill the Gospel message. We are the recipients of the Gospel message – not givers. Our commitment or surrender does not become part of the Gospel message. The Gospel is not a negotiable message that we give to man where he is entitled to do his part by surrendering to God and giving up all of his sins. The Gospel is all about what Christ has done for man. It has nothing to do with what man can do for God. **The Gospel is something for me to believe – not something for me to do.**

Of course, there are unsaved people who do come to know Christ as Savior even though they are presented with the demands of Lordship Salvation. This is because whenever the claims of Christ are presented the truth about the Gospel can override the errors incorporated by man (Rom. 1:16; Rom. 10:17). God still works in spite of man's theological blunders (Phil. 1:18). His truth still goes marching on. Many people who are not saved realize that only God's grace can save them and will often say in brokenness that they

are willing to follow Christ and obey Him, while recognizing that it's only grace that truly saves them (Eph. 2:8).

I have had people personally tell me they were presented with Lordship Salvation teaching and truly did embrace Christ by faith through grace. We must also remember that not all Christians who present Lordship Salvation teaching boldly demand that following Christ, discipleship, and obedience are *necessary requirements* for salvation. They subtly incorporate these things in a brief saying at the end of the Gospel presentation, as a last-ditch effort to teach Lordship Salvation without overriding the truth about grace. However, the implication of what they are saying or teaching lost sinners is that discipleship/mastery/lordship is necessary for one's salvation to take place.

There are several thoughts to consider when thinking about a sinner's response to the Gospel with the addition of lordship teaching. First, it's *the Gospel that saves sinners – not their promises to God*. Therefore, if a person is saved it's because of the sinner's response to the Gospel message (Rom. 1:16) and God's grace (Eph. 2:8).

Second, presenting Lordship Salvation to people can seriously *confuse* those who have previously tried to change or reform their lives but have failed. It may distract some people from freely embracing grace and salvation since they know they have already tried to do what was right but failed.

Third, those who were saved by God's grace can afterward *lack the assurance* of their salvation since they made a promise they cannot keep or fulfill. They may have trusted in God's grace to initially save them but later on become confused regarding assurance and eternal security (Gal. 3:2-3; 5:1).

Fourth, Lordship Salvation teaching can also *keep people from coming to genuine faith* in Christ (John 3:14-16). People might think that in order to get to grace they must make a promise to follow and obey Christ. They can view grace as something which one can merit through obedience and following Christ. However, the only way we can get to grace is through faith (Eph. 2:8) – not by following Christ.

For all these reasons presenting the Gospel along with the Lordship Salvation teaching is a dangerous diversion from true evangelism. It's far better to present the Gospel and leave the rest with God. We don't have to bait unsaved people with Lordship Salvation teaching to see if they are going to be genuine Christians. We are to simply present the Gospel, preach Christ, and leave the repenting and turning of the sinner to God.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:2:
"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The only thing Paul presented to the unsaved was the message of "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" - not making Jesus lord and following Christ. Neither Paul nor Philip (Acts 8:5) presented Lordship Salvation to the unsaved masses. It was only the message of Christ crucified – not Christ's lordship or mastery over one's life.

Lordship Legalism

The crux of the Lordship salvation or mastery/discipleship issue is this. **Is becoming a disciple or follower of Jesus a condition or requirement for salvation?** Must we make Jesus Lord of every area of our lives in order to be saved? Must we be obedient to His commands so we can be saved? Again, if discipleship and lordship is necessary for salvation, then we are frontloading the Gospel with "works of righteousness" (Titus 3:5) or legalism (Acts 15:1) which is man's subtle attempt to gain God's favor and blessing. **To preach that discipleship/mastery or surrender to Christ's lordship is part of the actual Gospel message would also mean that we could preach that confession, baptism, restitution, commitment, good works, or some other requirement is necessary for salvation.** This is simply erroneous and is the mark of legalism (the way of human effort).

Lordship Salvation teachers simply confuse the **SIGN** of salvation (works) and make it become part or the **WAY** of salvation that brings salvation into our lives through redefining the meaning of faith. **Do not confuse <u>becoming</u> a Christian with <u>being</u> a Christian.** Don't tell a poor lost sinner that he must live the Christian life in order to be saved! **Do not confuse the <u>results</u> of salvation (works and obedience) and make them the <u>requirements</u> for salvation.** This is legalism in disguise.

Luke 18:18
"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, **what shall I do** to inherit eternal life?"

The word "believe" is used 99 times to describe the requirement for eternal life. If discipleship is required for salvation, then baptism must also be required for salvation. Jesus in the Great Commission passage taught the way to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). We are commissioned to baptize them (vs. 19) and then teach them to follow Christ's commands (vs. 20). Nobody would ever deny this. However, if discipleship is a condition to meet for salvation, then the first part of making a disciple must also be included – "baptizing them." **In short, if discipleship is the same as salvation, then one must be baptized to be saved! This is because baptism was part of the discipleship process.**

In addition, if discipleship or following Christ is required for salvation, then a person must continue to follow Christ's words in order to be saved.

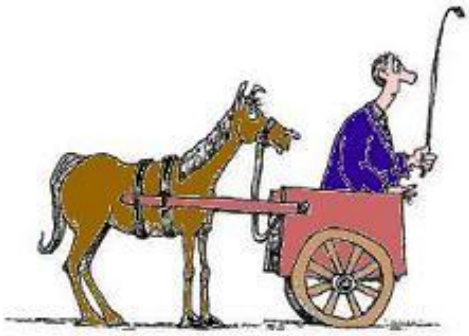
John 8:31
"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."

Does a person really need to continue in order to be converted? Of course, Jesus was speaking of the *evidence* of salvation and not the *requirement* for salvation. **Both baptism and following Christ's commands are the <u>proof</u> of one's salvation – not the <u>way</u> of salvation**. When those who embrace Lordship Salvation press upon sinners that discipleship is a necessary expression of a person's saving faith and salvation, they inevitably trap

them in legalism instead of the liberty of the Gospel message (Gal. 5:1; Phil. 3:9).

The Cart Before the Horse

Those who embrace the Lordship Salvation position have put the cart before the horse. They preach commitment to Christ (following Christ) as a necessary requirement to be saved. However, this conclusion erodes the truth about faith alone in Christ alone.

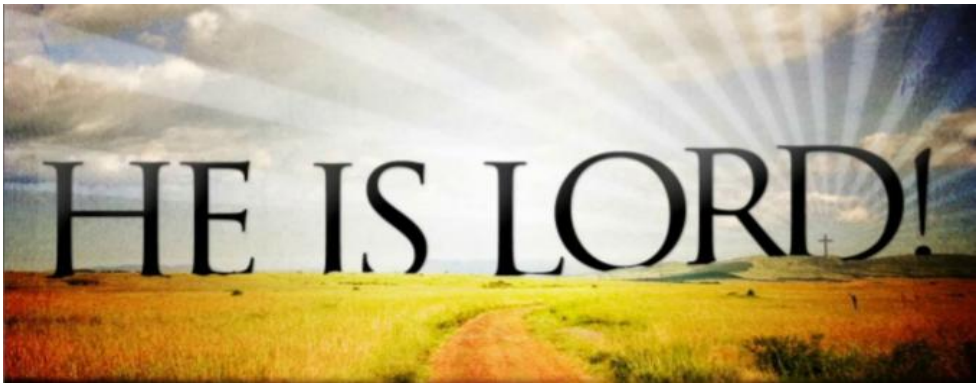


George Zeller explains it like this:
"It is not our COMMITMENT that saves us; it is CHRIST who saves us. Following Christ is a result of salvation, not a condition of salvation. Before we can FOLLOW CHRIST in discipleship we must COME TO CHRIST for salvation. Before we can COME AFTER CHRIST (Luke 9:23)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

This statement is Biblical and cannot be overturned. Please understand that we must first come to Christ for salvation (Luke 14:23) and after we are saved, we then come to Him for discipleship (Luke 14:27). Let us not confuse the two or join the two together in an unbiblical alliance. As already stated, **the Lordship advocates attempt to make behavior and fruit (good works) essential *ingredients* of saving faith rather than the *evidence* of saving faith.** They put the cart before the horse. Something else needs to be said at this point in our study. **The message of discipleship does not pertain to the issue of <u>where</u> you will spend eternity but <u>what</u> you will have in eternity!** Discipleship or following Christ results in reward (Matt. 16:24, 27) while faith results in regeneration (1 John 5:1).

Don't put the cart before the horse.

He is Lord!



Can a person receive Jesus as his Savior without receiving Him as his Lord? This is the heart of the lordship salvation debate. The answer is easy. A person can never receive Christ as Savior without receiving Him as Lord. However, it's the definition or meaning of the term "Lord" that helps us to correctly understand the answer to this question.

Lordship Salvation Premise: We are to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). Lord means master and therefore in order to be saved we must submit to Christ as our personal Lord. This means we must commit ourselves to following, obeying, and serving Him the rest of our lives.

The Lordship position seems undeniable and no one who is evangelical should dare challenge it. However, the mistake is the misunderstanding of the word "Lord" as it relates to the salvation contexts of Scripture. The question is not, "Is Jesus Christ Lord?" He is Lord. **The New Testament word "Lord" was applied to Jesus Christ in order to express His deity, or that He was God Himself. It was not used as a name to imply the sinner's subjective response to His mastery over their lives.** Jesus Christ is "Lord of all" (Acts 10:36) already. Therefore, no person can make Him what He already is. Jesus is Lord of everything because He is God or the sovereign, supreme, Ruler of the universe (Rev. 19:16).

"Jesus is Lord" (God) was an early church declaration of faith (a creedal statement) that linked the person of Christ with Jehovah or God of Old Testament revelation (Acts 2:34, 36, Rom. 10:9; John 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:3; Heb. 1:8-10). The Old Testament Scripture repeatedly linked the term

"Lord" with God (Gen. 15:2, 8, Ex. 23:17; Deut. 29:6; Judg. 6:22; 2 Samuel 7:28; 1 Kings 18:39; Psalm 30:2, 35:24; 86:15; 88:1; Jer. 38:17; Hos. 2:23).

In New Testament times it was also used as a designation of deity ("Lord God" – Rev. 4:8, 11; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 18:8; 19:1,6; 21:22; 22:5-6). Therefore, the term "Lord" was coupled with the term God to identify Christ with the Jehovah of Old Testament revelation. Even in the Old Testament Jesus was assigned the title "Lord" (Isa. 3:4; Ps. 110:1) to indicate His deity. The New Testament is claiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, that is, He is God – the revelation of Jehovah Himself (compare Joel 2:32 with Rom. 10:13).

There could be no mistake about Jesus Christ. He is Lord! He is the "Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31), "Lord of all" (Acts 10:36), "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24), "Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Romans 14:9) and the "Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). He is all these things since He is God incarnate (1 John 1:1, 14). In fact, He is "LORD of LORDS" (Rev. 19:16 – same Greek word). None of these designations imply that Jesus is the Master of one's life. They clearly reference Him as God of very God or the Supreme Creator and Controller of the universe. Someday the entire universe will bow before Him since He is Lord or the absolute sovereign God who alone deserves worship (Phil. 2:9-11).

When a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) he is believing in the only true God and Savior. The Bible does not teach that a person must *make* Jesus their Lord in order to be saved but *believe* on the Jesus Christ in order to be saved (Acts 16:31). The salvation contexts always point to Christ's deity when using the title "Lord."

Christ does not <u>become</u> our Lord in order to be saved. We must <u>believe</u> that He is the Lord God who has risen from the dead to save us.

The teaching of Romans 10:9-10 can be summarized in this way:
"**That** (purpose clause looking back to the mouth and heart analogy) **if thou shalt confess with thy mouth** (the PROOF of salvation - to say the same thing that is already in the heart – the credal statement of all Christians) **the Lord Jesus** (a grammatical parallel, apposition, two words possessing the same significance – "Jesus as Lord," "Jesus is Lord," "Jesus is God"), **and shalt believe in thine heart** (the WAY of salvation - a belief or faith that

presupposes and is a precondition to confession) **that God** (the Father) **hath raised him from the dead** (the evidence that Jesus is Lord, that He is God), **thou shalt be saved** (the belief does the saving and the confession is the confirming of a person's salvation). **For** (the conjunction now explaining the proper order of salvation) **with the heart man believeth unto righteousness** (**THE HEART BELIEVES** - how one is saved through faith in Christ resulting in imputed righteousness as stated in Romans 1:17; 3:22; 4:5, 14; 9:30); **and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation**" (**THE MOUTH AGREES** - what happens after a person is saved, confessing Christ's deity as the risen Lord, providing authentication or proof of one's faith and salvation).

In other words, a person confesses after they have been saved that Jesus is God and proves the genuineness of his faith. Confessing with the mouth (Rom. 10:9) that Jesus is Lord (God) is mentioned first to conform to the order of the quotation from Deuteronomy 30:14 in Romans 10:8. The confession does not preceded salvation. In other words, it's not part of conversion. It follows salvation and faith in Christ. The point is this. If Jesus is Lord (God) then He has also risen from the dead! These are two twin truths that cannot be separated. Christ's resurrection proves that He is Lord (Acts 2:32-36). Christ's resurrection is the evidence that He was the Lord (Rom. 4:24; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14).

"He is Lord, He is Lord,
He is risen from the dead and He is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess
That Jesus Christ is Lord."

When a person is outwardly <u>confessing</u> Christ as Lord (God) it's because he has already inwardly <u>confirmed</u> in his own heart ("shall believe in thine heart") that Christ has risen from the dead. The outward confession of Christ's lordship (Jesus is God though the resurrection) demonstrates that a person's faith already rests in the resurrected Christ. Romans 10:9 is teaching that a person confirms his salvation in the resurrected Christ when he confesses that Jesus is God. **The outward confession of Christ's deity authenticates an individual's salvation.** The one (confession of Christ's deity) presupposes the other (belief in His resurrection) and the confession

then gives witness to a person's salvation. So when a person confessed that "Jesus is Lord" he was declaring that Jesus is God and He rose from the dead.

When a person *confesses* that Christ is Lord, they are purposely saying that He is the same God of Old Testament revelation (Isaiah 43:11; 44:6, 8; 45:21-22) where Jehovah declares Himself to be the only Lord, God, and Savior. There is none else! When a person *believes* in his heart that Christ has risen from the dead, he confirms both His deity (Rom. 1:4) and payment for sin on the sinner's behalf (Rom. 4:25).

Here is a simple summary of what Romans 10:9-10 teaches. The outward confession that Jesus is Lord (God) proves a person has already believed in his own heart that God has raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 10:9). The confession does not actually *precede* one's salvation as Lordship Salvation conclude but *follows* it and confirms one's salvation as stated in Romans 10:10. The text says in Romans 10:9 "thou shalt be saved." In other words, one way a person can know he is saved is by the outward confession that Jesus is Lord (God).

When a person outwardly confesses who Christ is (Jesus as Lord - God), he confirms by the confession that he has believed this truth in his heart (Jesus is Lord – God) and is already saved. That the outward confession results from the inward belief which has already occurred in the heart is made clear in Romans 10:10. One believes in Christ for imputed righteousness and then confession of Christ's deity (Jesus as Lord) follows to substantiate a person's salvation. The confession is "unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10) – not *for* salvation. In short, the person will not be ashamed to confess Christ after he is saved (Rom. 10:11).

An *outward* confession of faith in Christ's person (Rom. 10:9a, 10b) indicates a person's *inward* faith rests in the resurrected Christ (Rom. 10:9b, 10a). The believer may not know of an exact date or time he was saved, but if he confesses Christ (who He was), then he can be sure that his faith rests in Christ (what He did).

The point is this. Jesus is the only Lord (God) and resurrected Savior who can save a person's soul. Outside God man is doomed to die the sinner's

death and go to hell. *A person must believe Christ is risen from the dead in order to be saved and he will eventually confess this truth to prove or authenticate his salvation*. **When a person places his faith in the resurrected Christ to save him, he will eventually come to the place where he verbally confesses that Jesus is God and give confirmation of his salvation.** So when Romans 10:9 says "thou shalt be saved" it is obviously concluding that the inward heart belief saves the person and the outward confession confirms a person's salvation. **The inward reality of a person's faith in the resurrected Christ leads to the outward confession of Christ's lordship (deity).**

In the early centuries, the Christian believers refused to bow down to Caesar and call him Lord (deity or God). Instead, they confessed that Jesus was Lord! This means that every true believer should without any hesitation say "Yes" and "Amen" to the fact that Jesus is Lord (God). Every true believer will come to embrace this claim for himself. If a person can't say this, we would have to question whether or not he is really saved (1 Cor.12:3). The qualifying word "if" (Rom. 10:9) suggests that when a person confesses Christ's Lordship (that Christ is God) then his salvation can be authenticated as being true or genuine.

The reverse order is seen in Romans 10:10 – belief and then confession. Paul clarifies that a person's belief is what actually justifies him before God (Rom. 4:3, 5) while his confession follows his justification to confirm his salvation. **Believing is the <u>root</u>; confession is the <u>fruit</u>.** The confession *validates* or *confirms* a person's salvation. **The purpose of Romans 10:9-10 is not only designed to teach the <u>way</u> of salvation but also the <u>proof</u> of one's salvation.** In these verses, Paul is speaking of the confession of Christ's deity as *evidence* or a *token* of one's saving faith in the resurrected Christ. **Here the confession becomes the <u>confirmation</u> of a person's salvation.**

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. **Confession is not something that a person does in order to <u>be</u> saved; confession is something that a saved person does <u>after</u> 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.

To verbally confess Christ to others is the normal experience of the Christian life as Paul confirms in the very next verse: "For the scripture saith, Whosoever believieth on him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. 10:11). A Christian will want to make his new faith in Christ's person and work eventually known as the early church did (1 Cor. 12:3). However, the outward verbal confession is not required for salvation to occur, or else, deaf and deathbed conversions could not result in a person's salvation. One must remember that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45). Also, we must remember that verbal confessions do not always immediately occur because of fear of reprisal (John 12:42; 19:38) and physical limitations (Ex. 4:11). This does not mean a person is not saved.

Please note that the heart enters into the picture of salvation (Rom. 10:10) for man's will is affected in such a way that it responds to Christ and the Gospel message in order to receive the benefits of salvation. Acts 8:37 say, "if thou believest with all thine heart." When a person is saved God does a wonderful work in the heart (Acts 16:14). Thus, Paul states that when a person believes in his own heart that Christ has risen from the dead, he will eventually confess Christ's lordship, or deity, and demonstrate his salvation before others.

The outward confession presupposes the inward belief in Christ's resurrection (as stated in Romans 10:9) and provides the confirmation that a person has already believed that Christ has risen from the dead and that his faith rests in the risen Lord. Justification deals with the heart and involves belief while confession deals with the mouth and deals with the confirmation of salvation.

Jesus proved that He was Lord by His resurrection (Rom. 14:9) and a person who is saved will come to confess or acknowledge "Jesus as Lord" (the sovereign God). **One does not confess what one does not believe! Therefore, confession becomes the outward and audible expression of one's inward faith in the resurrected Christ who is the Lord (God).** Ask a

Mormon or Jehovah's Witness if they believe that" Jesus is Lord" or that He is God. They will be quick to deny that He is Lord or God and give no outward evidence that their faith is genuine (John 8:24; 2 Thess. 3:2). In summary, both confession of Christ's deity (Rom. 10:9-11) and good works (James 2:14-26) become the outward visible evidence or expressions that confirm one's faith and salvation as being genuine. **Confession is faith made audible. Good works are faith made visible.**

Of course, Lordship Salvation teachers suggest that the mouth confession of Christ's lordship is dealing with surrender to Christ, as a person's master, which includes a promise to follow and obey Him the rest of a person's life. However, as we have proven, Romans 10:9-10 is not dealing with the question of surrender to Christ's lordship but with belief in Christ's deity and resurrection which is embraced in the heart and declared before others (Rom. 10:9).

Elmer Enlow says:
"To confess Jesus as Lord surely means more than to admit that He is Lord: it means to submit to Him as one's own Lord" (Eternal Life: On What Conditions, pp. 3-4).

Enlow's conclusion is errant. Whenever the term "Lord" is used in salvation contexts it is a clear reference to Christ's deity (Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:13). **The confession in this verse has to do with confessing Christ's deity, in view of His resurrection, which validates His deity.** *The text is talking about confessing something about Christ - not submitting to Christ.* **Jesus is Lord because of what He has done – not what we do.** The famous Christian declaration of faith ("Jesus as Lord" – Rom. 10:9 with 1 Cor. 12:3) is seen in this salvation context. In short, when Scripture calls Jesus "Lord" it ascribes full and absolute deity to Him.

Christ's substitution for sin is worthless unless He is the Lord or sovereign God, since only God can save people from the consequences of their sins (Luke 5:21). **A person therefore must accept who Jesus Christ claimed to be (Lord or God) if He is to be saved (John 8:24). Christ cannot be received as one's personal substitute for sin unless He is received as the sovereign Son of God who has risen from the dead.** He must believe that Jesus Christ

was God incarnate in the flesh Who died as his substitute for sin, bearing sin's penalty in his place, and rose again from the dead.

J. Gresham Machen, writing in reference to the widespread pagan use of the term "Lord," observed: "When the early Christian missionaries, therefore, called Jesus 'Lord,' It was perfectly plain to their pagan hearers everywhere that they meant to ascribe divinity to Him and desired to worship Him."

This means that when a sinner calls upon the name of the Lord for salvation (Rom. 10:13) he is calling upon the only true Lord (God and sovereign Ruler of the universe) that can save them. I do not make Jesus Lord of my life in order to be saved but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be my Savior. In short, a lost sinner acknowledges Christ as Lord or being the only God and sovereign potentate that can save their soul.

<u>Believing</u> on the Lord Jesus Christ and <u>following</u> Christ as Lord occur at two different phases of a person's life. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) occurs at the time of a person's salvation whereas following Christ as a person's Lord occurs after salvation (Matt. 16:24) and is a matter that pertains to the Christian life (John 10:27-28). **I must first <u>call</u> upon the Lord Jesus Christ embracing His personal claims (Rom. 10:13) before I can <u>follow</u> Him as the personal Lord, God, and Master of my life (Luke 9:23).**

Colossians 2:6
"As ye have therefore received Christ **Jesus the Lord**, so walk ye in him."

In this verse, Paul is looking back to the time when these saints were saved. Receiving Christ **"the Lord"** (who He is) speaks of the time when they received Christ (John 1:12) as their Savior. It was when they reached out in faith to embrace Christ's person and saving work, recognizing that He was the only sovereign God which could save their soul from hell. Receiving Jesus as Lord speaks of embracing His **person** for the free gift of salvation and eternal life. It does not speak of making a **promise** to follow Christ or determining to make Jesus the controller of one's life by submitting to His plan of discipleship. When a person expressed faith in Christ as Savior, he receives Him as the only true Lord or sovereign God that can save him.

Lordship Salvation advocates create two errors. First, they create a *labeling fallacy* by assigning much more to the term "Lord" than deity or sovereignty within the contexts of the salvation passages. They claim that the term always implies personal surrender and dedication to Christ as the Master of one's life forever. The meaning of the term "Lord" always implies a promise on the part of the person to serve Christ and obey His commands as one's new Master.

Second, they also create a *linguistic fallacy* where one takes the meaning of the term "Lord" (sovereign Master or supreme Controller) and illegitimately transfers the same meaning or understanding to another word in the same verse or context such as the words "believe" or "faith" (Rom. 10:9; Acts 16:31). They then assign or include the same meaning of mastery and ownership to the words believe or faith wherever these words appear elsewhere in Scripture.

Through misguided teaching and a misunderstanding of the term "Lord" unsaved people are often asked to *make* Christ Lord of their lives, or promise to obey Christ's commands, follow His plan for discipleship, so they can express the kind of faith that saves them (an obedient faith, a faith that works). But this implies a person must do something in order to be saved. It implies human effort and work. A person must submit to Christ's teachings about discipleship, allow Him to control His life, and promise to be obedient to Him the rest of his life.

The truth is this. **I don't make Jesus Lord; He already is Lord! The fact that Jesus is Lord is something I must believe in order to be saved.** I must acknowledge that Christ is the only true supreme God of the universe who can save me. This is what the term "Lord" means in every salvation passage of Scripture. So can a person receive Jesus as his Savior without receiving Him as his Lord? No!! **A person must receive Christ as the only true Lord and sovereign God who can save their soul from hell.** Allah and all the other false gods of Eastern religions cannot save. Only "Jesus as Lord" (Rom. 10:9), or the Lord God who has risen from the dead can save a man from hell (Deut. 4:36; Isa 45:5, 18).

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.”

George Zeller makes an important observation:
“If Christ is your Saviour, then He is also your Lord because truly that is who He is! 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 <u>the Lord</u>**" (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.”

The idea of *making* Jesus your Lord involves human works and is nothing more than legalism in disguise. **Nowhere in Scripture are we told to <u>make</u> Jesus our Lord and Savior in order to be saved. We must simply <u>believe</u> that He is the Lord, the only true and sovereign God that can save our soul (Acts 16:31; John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47).**

George Zeller concludes:
“Jesus is Lord right now whether you believe it or not, whether you live like it or not, whether you acknowledge it or not or whether you surrender to Him or not.”

2 Corinthians 4:5
“For we preach not ourselves, but **Christ Jesus the Lord**; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”

The Savior that Paul preached is already the Lord! This reminds us once again that Jesus Christ cannot be other than who He is! Christ cannot be divided. If He is the Savior, then He must also be the Lord! Christ is our Savior because He is Lord or the only true God, Creator, Controller, and Sovereign potentate. The point is this. **Only the Sovereign Master, Controller, and Sustainer of the universe can save your soul! Only God can save poor lost sinners.** Jesus is Lord! He is already Lord. Jesus is God (1 Tim. 2:5) and therefore is the only way to Heaven (John 14:6). **We are to preach that Jesus is Lord to lost sinners by presenting Him as the only true God**

that died on the cross, rose again, who can forgive sin, save, and grant eternal life.

Jesus said in John 6:47:
"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

It should be noted that the repeated expression "our Lord and Saviour" (2 Peter 1:11; 3:2, 18) is spoken by those who are already Christians. God's children can address Christ as Lord (God) who is the sovereign Master of their lives and their personal Savior. This is because through their surrender and discipleship Jesus Christ has become Lord (Master) over their lives. Such was the case with Thomes when he openly confessed or declared, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). This is a valid way for believers to address Christ since they are already God's children, who have God's life, and who are connected to Him in a personal relationship. They should naturally surrender to Him as their God and Master and follow Him in their Christian life.

"Lord and Saviour" is a personal designation given to Christ by Christians who are already followers of Him. It's appropriate to talk about *Christians* making Jesus Lord of their lives since He has already become their Savior (Acts 9:6; 22:10; 1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 3:8, 2 Tim. 1:8). Christians should develop a personal and close relationship with Christ as their Lord or Master in which they are subservient to Him and willing to obey and follow Him (Rom. 14:8; 1 Cor. 7:22-23).

Luke 6:46
"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

The Christian embraces Christ as his Master or Lord from the standpoint of a personal relationship which he already possesses with Christ. A Christian should be willing to surrender to Christ, follow Him, and make Jesus Lord of his life. Once again, in John 20:28 Thomas addressed the risen Christ as "My Lord and my God." Thomas was clearly acknowledging Christ's deity in this passage of Scripture in view of His resurrection from the dead when calling Jesus both "Lord" and "God" which were designations of deity found in the Old Testament Scriptures (Gen. 15:2, 8, Ex. 23:17; Deut. 29:6; Judg. 6:22; 2

Samuel 7:28; 1 Kings 18:39; Psalm 30:2, 35:24; 86:15; 88:1; Jer. 38:17; Hos. 2:23). But at the same time, Thomas was also personalizing and deepening the relationship he had previously possessed with Christ as His own personal Master. Every Christian should confidently say that Jesus is the Master and Ruler of my life. **The Bible teaches lordship Christian living but not Lordship salvation.** There is a difference!

A follower of Christ would naturally possess this Master relationship with Christ and would respond in such a way as Thomas did. However, a lost or unsaved person embraces Jesus Christ as Lord in a different manner than the Christian or those who are already followers of Christ. The unsaved person embraces Christ as the only Lord (God and supreme Ruler) that can save their soul. When a lost person believes on the (not my) Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) they do receive Him as "the Lord" because that is exactly who He is! He is Lord! He is God. **The unsaved are never called upon to make Jesus their Lord (legalism) but to believe in Him as the only Lord who can save them (grace).**

A Strawman Argument

In advocating Lordship salvation, I once heard Dr. Kennedy say on the radio, "Can you imagine someone saying to Jesus, 'I want you to save **me,** but I don't want you to come into my life and be my Lord or Master?'" No, I could never imagine this in the way James Kennedy told the story. However, this is a strawman argument**, a** weak or imaginary argument erected and used to support the Lordship Salvation position. I could never imagine anyone saying this to Jesus. Why? It's because no repentant person would possess this attitude toward Jesus.

Here is the point. This is not an issue in a person's heart who has truly repented of his sins before God and confronted the same holy God of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5). Dr. Kennedy made it an issue! This issue would never arise in

the heart of a repentant person who has a change of heart regarding his sin (Matt. 21:29) and who is ready to turn to God away from his sins (1 Thess. 1:9). This is why we do not need to press the lordship/mastery legalistic requirements upon repentant sinners and try and get them to make commitments, meet certain requirements, and essentially promise to do something in order to be converted.

The repentant individual will naturally want to begin a new relationship with Christ following his salvation experience (Acts 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21) because of the entrance of new life into the realm of his spirit (Ezek 36:26-27). Therefore, there is no need to burden the sinner with lordship requirements so they can be saved. God simply allows people to repent of those things that are keeping them from coming to Christ and then allows them to begin the lordship/mastery life following their repentance and conversion. **It should also be noted that the <u>attitude</u> of repentance will naturally lead to the <u>gratitude</u> of surrender in the Christian life.**

Kennedy's point is correct in that no person can be saved who is in defiance against God. However, he is wrong to assume that a person who is ready to repent and be saved is in defiance against God just because he does not embrace the steps and claims of Lordship Salvation. Actually, Dr. Kennedy uses circular reasoning to prove his Lordship Salvation point of view. He makes the assumption that someone could come to this conclusion (they want to be saved while in rebellion against Christ) if they don't embrace Lordship Salvation teaching. Such is not the case when a person truly repents before God (Acts 20:21), nor should it become an issue in the salvation of a sinner since a changed attitude toward sin naturally occurs in the heart of a person who wants to be freed from sin's power (Luke 15:17-19). Therefore, Kennedy's argument has no weight. It's a strawman argument.

Let's Make a Deal

Essentially, Lordship Salvation teaches that simple faith in Jesus Christ is not enough for salvation. Something else is needed. A solid commitment to Christ is needed. A person needs to surrender to the Lordship of Christ. There must be a willingness to obey Christ's commands and become a

disciple or follower of the teachings of Jesus Christ. **A person must promise to do something before he can have the confidence that Christ will save him. He must meet some *necessary requirements* for salvation. In essence, he must make a deal with Jesus Christ for the rest of his life.**

Lordship salvation requires the sinner to make a deal or contract with God. The sinner must promise that he will be obedient to Christ's commands and plan for discipleship so he can be saved. **Lordship Salvation teaches that if the sinner keeps his end of the bargain, which includes 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.

The Bible teaches that you cannot outwardly **change something** (reformation), **do something** (legalism) **become something** (a follower or disciple of Jesus), **promise something** ("God, I'll always serve and obey You"), **give something** ("I will give you my fame, funds, and family"), **try something** ("I'll try hard to live for You from now on"), or **bargain with something** ("I'll give You my life in exchange for salvation") in order to be saved and earn God's favor. This is because salvation is "by grace" (Eph. 2:8) and "Not of works" (Eph. 2:9).

Salvation is not what we can do for Christ; it's about what Christ has already done for us (John 19:30). Now just stop and think of witnessing to a man called Billy. What will you say to Billy if you espouse Lordship Salvation teaching? It would probably be something like this. "Billy, you *must* become a follower or disciple of Christ in order to be saved. You *must* make Christ Master of your life so you can have eternal life. You *must* obey His commands and come to terms with Christ's conditions for salvation. You

must surrender your entire life to God before He will accept you as His child. You *must* give up all your sins and sign on the dotted line. You *must* make a promise that you will live for Christ the rest of your days on earth so you can have eternal life. You *must* commit your entire life to Christ so you can be saved and be sure of your salvation. Billy, are you ready to be saved?"

This approach to evangelism certainly does not present the message of free grace or the free gift of eternal life to poor lost sinners. It's a legalistic cover-up which sends a wrong message to poor lost sinners who are "without strength" to save themselves and please God (Rom. 5:6). Grace, salvation, and eternal life are freely given to us (Rom. 3:24; 6:23; 10:13). We don't earn these gifts by becoming a disciple or follower of Christ or merit them by making promises and bargains with God at the time of our salvation. We come to God as a broken sinner. We come "Just as I Am" as the beloved hymn says. There are no demands and no price to be paid on our end. This is because Jesus paid it all for us on the cross (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23) where He took the penalty for our sins and became our Substitute.

A Game of Percentages

Lordship Salvation holds the impossible doctrine of salvation by commitment and obedience. If submission, obedience, and commitment is a necessary part of faith which results in salvation, then how much is required? Salvation and the assurance of one's salvation become relegated to a game of percentages in the Lordship Salvation position. The doctrine that says one is saved through submission to the lordship of Christ is a doctrine that cannot be substantiated by Scripture. The impossibility of "perfect commitment" is a troublesome problem for those who teach this position. Many teach a Semi-Lordship Salvation. However, what percentage of commitment and discipleship can bring the assurance of salvation to the follower of Christ? Is it fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, or ninety percent? Of course, no person really knows.

MacArthur states how “the true disciple will never turn away completely” (The Gospel According to Jesus, p. 104) which is true. However, if discipleship and transformation becomes the underlying basis for knowing whether or not a person is saved, then we are back to the same old question. What *amount* or *degree* of disobedience can be tolerated in the Christian life of discipleship without doubting that a person was saved when they originally made Christ Lord or Master of their life? It’s usually assumed by Lordship Salvation teachers that a moment of failure does not invalidate a disciple’s credentials. However, does two moments, or three, or four?

How much evidence do I really need to know that I was saved and am saved? Can a person be saved at the present time, knowing that Christ is not Lord over every area of his life? Could a person turn away 10%, 20%, 50%, or 80% and still be sure of his salvation? **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.

What if a person does not follow Christ in the exact manner that was prescribed to him at the time of his salvation? What if a person becomes less dedicated to Christ? What if a person does not keep his previous promise about faithfully obeying Christ? Is he lost? Is he a defector? Maybe his faith in Christ was not genuine at the time of his conversion. Maybe he is not saved after all!

How much lack of obedience, commitment, and failure determines the unreliability of a person’s faith or salvation? How much surrender to Christ is enough to give a person the confidence that he is saved? What if a person no longer finds himself measuring up to his promise to make Jesus Lord or Master over every area of his life? Is he still a true follower of Christ and can he be saved? Where is the line that a person must cross to know whether or not he is truly saved or lost? How many failures invalidate a person’s discipleship and salvation?

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 issue. Again, we must ask, how willing must one be to submit, obey, and become a follower or disciple of Christ? 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 the conversion process, 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 truth is this. Every person who repents does possess a willingness or desire to break away from his sins which he knows have offended God's holiness (Isa. 55:7; Luke 15:17-19; 1 Thess. 1:9). However, a person must not make any promises and bargains with God in order to be saved. *Lordship Salvation promotes legalism and a lack of assurance regarding one's salvation.* One can never know for sure if they are submitting enough to Christ under the lordship view. This teaching eliminates security for the believer in Christ alone. This is unthinkable in light of the clear Biblical passages which promises assurance of salvation based upon Christ's finished work and the promises of His Word (John 3:15-16; 6:47; Romans 8:33-39; 1 Pet. 1:5; 1 John 5:13).

Here is the point. No person can determine his salvation on the basis of surrender, yielding, or promising to do or become something. It's impossible. **Salvation is not a game of chance and percentages. You don't roll the <u>dice</u> to see if you are saved; you look to the <u>death</u> of Christ (the Lamb of God) to know that you are saved (John 1:29).**

"If you from sin are longing to be free,
Look to the Lamb of God;
He, to redeem you, died on Calvary,
Look to the Lamb of God.

Look to the Lamb of God,
Look to the Lamb of God,
For He alone is able to save you,
Look to the Lamb of God."

Those who claim to have made Jesus Lord of their lives are often said to be "really saved" since they have made the commitment to abandoned themselves totally to Christ. However, there is no difference between being saved and "really saved." You are either saved or lost (John 3:36). There is no such thing as degrees in salvation, nor does salvation deal with percentages, since salvation is only based upon God's marvelous grace (Eph. 2:8). Grace takes away the guessing game and brings a person to rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ for his salvation (Heb. 10:14) and not his commitment to follow Christ. **Following Christ does not save us; Christ saves us! Salvation does not depend upon discipleship requirements; it depends upon Christ's death (John 3:16).**

Lordship salvation diminishes the value of Calvary. **In the Lordship view Christ becomes less the Savior and more the helper.** Under this view I cannot simply cast my soul upon the Lord as my Savior. Instead, I must cooperate with His program of discipleship and promise to follow Him all the days of my life.

Cheap Grace

This unbiblical expression or code words used by those who teach Lordship Salvation is designed to slander the Biblical teachings regarding free grace and simple faith in Christ for salvation. term "cheap grace" or inexpensive grace is a false concept of grace that is designed to take a potshot at the Biblical teaching of "free grace" (Rom. 3:24; Rom. 5:15). The idea is this. If God's grace is received at the time of salvation without any *payment*, *promise*, or *performance* on man's part, then it becomes cheap or inexpensive grace because it is not transforming grace that costs the person something (his obedience and works). However, the word cheap is a manmade expression that the Bible never assigns to grace.

Let's turn the tables on Lordship proponents. The teaching of saving grace is actually cheapened when man tries to link his own acts of obedience to grace since this distorts the true message of free grace (Rom. 11:6). To call grace "cheap" in anyway causes someone to fall from the true teaching and message about the freedom of grace ("ye are fallen from grace" - Gal. 5:4).

To conclude that a poor lost sinner must "pay the price" or "count the cost" of discipleship in order to keep grace from being cheap is ridiculous and ludicrous. Actually, the price or cost has already been paid on Calvary's cross (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). It cost God's Son His very own life to rescue us from hell (John 3:16). Jesus declared while hanging on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus paid it all and this alone makes grace very costly and priceless.

According to Lordship Salvation Reformed teaching, saving people without human commitment and obedience supposedly distorts the purpose of grace, which is to transform people. Therefore, grace without works is called cheap grace if people do not make a commitment to follow Christ, become His disciple, obey Him, and allow grace to transform their lives. Grace is viewed as being cheapened if man is not required to do something, become something, and promise something to Christ in order to receive salvation and eternal life. In other words, if a person receives the benefits of salvation freely without meeting the demands of discipleship, 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.

It's true that grace sanctifies people (Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:14); however, the sanctification that is related to grace comes after a person's conversion. **Sanctifying grace is <u>not</u> part of the conversion experience. Saving grace (Titus 2:11) precedes sanctifying grace (Titus 2:12).** You can't sanctify someone who is not saved! You cannot expect the sinner to live the Christian life. Therefore, the salvation aspect of God's grace is all that should be presented at the time of a person's salvation (Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11).

God's grace is not cheap or of no value just because some poor lost sinner at the time of his conversion fails to mention that he is going to try and

follow Jesus perfectly, as His disciple, or count the cost and promise to live right the rest of his days on earth. *The definition and description of grace is not preconditioned on man's response to God's grace.* In other words, grace can only be one thing - "free grace" (Rom. 3:24); it can never become cheap grace based upon man's response.

To attach a description of "cheap" (inexpensive) to the meaning of grace is sacrilegious. The Bible never speaks of grace in this way and neither should we in order to try and prove a lordship/mastery/disciple salvation theory. Cheap grace is an unbiblical expression that undermines the unchanging meaning of grace which is God's unmerited and underserved kindness extended to us through the death of Christ.

One thing is certain; God's grace is not cheap when it comes to the saving of the soul! **Grace is expensive. It cost God His dearly beloved Son (John 3:16).** To use the word cheap with the word grace seems heretical since it cost the Lord Jesus His very own life. The unmerited favor of God extended to the sinner for his salvation is the greatest theme of the Bible.

2 Corinthians 8:9
"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

"It took a miracle to put the stars in place,
It took a miracle to hang the world in space;
But when He saved my soul,
Cleansed and made me whole,
It took a miracle of love and grace!"

God's grace is not cheap! It cost the Father His own beloved Son (Rom. 8:32). If God's grace is cheap then why did Paul repeatedly refer to it as "the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7; 2:7)? Receiving God's grace and salvation does not cost us anything. It's free (Rom. 3:24). However, it cost Christ everything! This is why grace can never be cheap. Therefore, is free grace - not cheap grace! It is amazing grace - not cheap grace!

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see."

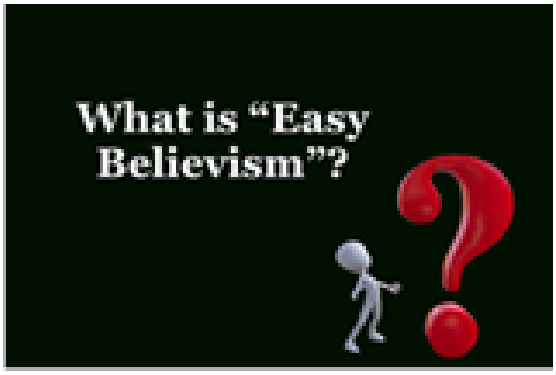
Who is there among blood-bought Christians today who can honestly call God's saving grace cheap? Away with such talk! Our Lord's grace which He showered upon us is not cheap or diminished in any way for the nature and meaning of grace is never based upon man's obedience and surrender but the sacrificial death of Christ. Who can place a value on the work of Christ in paying for our sins on the cross? The payment was made (John 19:30) and it was not cheap!

1 Peter 1:18 -19
"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation [received] by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious (*costly, highly valuable*) blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Once again, the only way grace could ever be viewed as cheap or of no value is if the recipient were asked to contribute to salvation. This would "frustrate" (Gal. 2:21) or set aside the entire teaching of salvation by grace alone (Eph. 2:8) and cheapen its saving value to the sinner. The free gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23) is also cheapened if it can be earned in any way by the sinner. So actually, the position of Lordship Salvation cheapens the meaning of free and undeserved grace by turning salvation into a works-oriented system which demands that a sinner must become better, improve his life, count the cost of discipleship, put everything on the altar, promise to live right the rest of his days on earth, and make Jesus master of His life forever. Furthermore, how could grace be free, undeserved, and unmerited, if it cost the sinner everything to receive it?

Easy Believism

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.

In short, if all a person must do is believe on Christ for their salvation, without making Jesus the complete Lord and Master of his life, then faith or simple trust in Jesus Christ becomes something that is too easy, simple, and narrow in its outward expression to Christ. *The meaning of faith must be broadened to include a person's works.* Faith must work to be genuine. 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 expression "easy believism" which is essentially "only believism" grew out of Lordship Salvation teaching. This phrase is often misunderstood by many sincere soul winners today. In fact, many soul winners wrongly use this as a code word of disdain and scorn when it comes to evangelism. Be careful when you use certain expressions; you may not know their original background and meaning. You might actually be endorsing some aberrant teaching that you don't agree with by using certain code words or sayings.

Reformed Theologians of the Lordship Salvation persuasion originally created this terminology ("easy believism") to teach Lordship Salvation. Again, they claim that if a person does not promise to make Jesus Lord over every area of his life (pre-salvation reformation), promise to become a follower of Christ, or make the commitment to live in compliance and obedience to Christ's demands for discipleship, that one's faith results in "easy believism" (meaning faith without works). As a result, a person who

does not surrender to discipleship/mastery/lordship salvation cannot possess genuine belief in Christ since his belief was not accompanied with works.

If a person just believes on Christ, they have fooled or deceived themselves into "easy believism" and their faith cannot be genuine. Of course, faith or belief (Greek - pistis) in Christ means only one thing - trust or reliance in Christ for salvation (Acts 16:31). Works have nothing to do with saving faith and the sinner's initial response to Christ.

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."

The good news is this. Salvation is a gift, and a gift can only be free. But Lordship Salvation must conclude that salvation is no longer a gift but is something that must be purchased by changing one's ways or by promising to do so in the future. Salvation becomes a barter system in which man promises to God to do something, instead of simply believing and receiving what God has done for us in Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). I can rest in this. But John Piper asserts that faith only gets God "on our side" and that works are essentially required to get us into Heaven is nothing but Roman Catholicism without the hope of purgatory.

In reply to this argument, Lordship Salvation teaching notoriously forgets that **works follow faith; they are not part of faith (James 2:17-20). Paul argued for the <u>priority</u> of faith alone (without works) to bring salvation into a person's life (Eph. 2:8-9). James argues for the <u>proof</u> of faith that follows salvation.** Faith in Christ is the basis of salvation whereas works serve as the barometer of our salvation.

The old adage is still true.
"Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone."

In other words, faith alone in Christ brings salvation into a person's life. However, after faith there will be the evidence and outward manifestation of works or a changed life (Eph. 2:10). Faith comes first and then works follow faith. **To connect works, discipleship, following Christ, and obedience with the actually meaning and definition of faith is a theological fallacy of the worst sort.** Faith is only one thing – trust or reliance upon Christ.

Galatians 3:26
"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

The expression "easy believism" is actually a mockery used in Reformed teaching which stresses that if a person only believes in Christ, without the accompanying promise of discipleship, following Christ, or making Jesus Lord over his entire life (sanctifying works), that his faith is too "easy." Therefore, faith must include works and therefore become "hard believism." Reformed teachers say that we should make it hard for sinners to believe in Christ. This is a disguised version of a works-oriented salvation.

As far as the teaching of "easy believism" is concerned, belief in Christ without works is the only true and Biblical expression of faith – not belief plus works (a faith that works resulting in salvation). Therefore, as it stands, the term "simple" or "easy" faith (believism) is a proper expression which stands in stark contrast to hard believism which says doing something, committing to something, or promising something is part of saving faith. So, faith or trust in Christ is simple. The works of Lordship Salvation should not be added to the meaning of faith. Faith is not hard. It is simple reliance or trust in Jesus Christ for one's salvation.

The way to express belief (without the works of Lordship Salvation) is simple and easy. It's faith alone in Christ alone. It's not hard. But from the perspective of the human race, it's hard to believe. Let me explain. To believe in Jesus Christ and place your eternal destiny in the hands of someone who died 2,000 years ago on a cross and rose again is not easy!

Think of it like this. To believe that Christ can remove the guilt of all your sins and give you eternal life is not easy. It's takes *great faith* to entrust

one's entire soul and future destiny to Christ (2 Tim. 1:12). To believe that Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for your sin and upon believing in Him you can receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life is not easy. In this sense, it's actually hard to believe.

One man asked me, "How does the death of a man on a cross 2,000 years have any significance for my life today?" This is an honest and soul-searching question. It's hard for people to understand and believe that Christ's death which occurred thousands of years ago can meet a need in their life today. In fact, it's not easy to believe that someone will do something good for us even when we do not deserve it (Rom. 5:6-10).

It actually takes a huge step of faith to believe in Jesus Christ so He might become one's Savior. It takes a person to place total confidence in Christ's person and work (John 1:12) to become a Christian. Therefore, from a *human perspective or understanding* it's not easy to express faith in Christ, but the *manner or way* in which faith is expressed is easy for it's the only thing a person can do in order to be saved (Acts 16:31). Only believe!

Instead of bowing before the immense generosity of God many people slander His offer of free grace through simple faith by coining the derogatory statements of cheap grace and easy believism. One must understand that the two expressions of "cheap grace" and "easy believism" are actually expressions of mockery designed to blur the true Biblical teachings about free grace and simple faith in Christ.

Paying the Price

The salvation of unregenerate or unredeemed people does not require them to give God a prior payment toward their salvation. The whole idea that a sinner must "pay the price" for his salvation, so it can be deemed genuine, is erroneous. For many the price that must

be paid is to make Jesus Lord (Master) over one's life forever, to obey Him, and to follow His requirements for becoming a disciple. The lordship teaching becomes like a payment or installment plan which people give to God so they can be saved. They are required to initially give a "rent in advance" payment and then keep giving God checks throughout their entire lives to make sure they have paid the necessary price that God demands from them to be saved.

The good news is this. The payment has already been made 2,000 years ago when Christ died on the cross (Gal. 3:10; 1 Pet. 2:24). "It is finished" (John 19:30) was His cry! It's done! The price has already been paid. Therefore, we can't offer God anything (our commitment, works, promises, discipleship, reformation, transformation) in order to appease His wrath. God does not demand any more payments! Eternal life is a free gift that demands no price from the recipient (Rom. 4:4-5; 6:23). This is because the price for the free gift was already paid by its provider (Gal. 3:10-13).

"Jesus paid it all
All to Him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow."

A debt is something that you owe (Rom. 4:4). However, there are no debts we must pay to God for our salvation since the debt has already been paid in full by the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. This is why salvation and eternal life are absolutely free.

Revelation 21:6 declares:
"And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life **freely**."

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**."

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?"

Salvation really is free!

Dr. Harry Ironside, in his tract entitled "Another Gospel," wrote these words: "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."

Coming to Christ for discipleship involves a personal cost (Matt. 16:24-25) but coming to Christ for salvation does not involve any cost (Isa. 55:1 – "without price"). This is because Jesus already paid the necessary cost, fine, or payment that God required to free us from sin's penalty. **We are bought with the price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23) so we don't have to pay the price for our salvation!**

Augustus M. Toplady said:
"Payment God will not twice demand—
First at my bleeding Surety's hand
And then again at mine."

To Dream the Impossible Dream

Today unsaved people are actually being asked to earn God's love and acceptance by promising to follow Christ and making Him the Master of their lives. But requiring a daily commitment to make Christ the Lord of one's life is *asking unregenerate people to make a promise to God which they can in no way keep*. It's impossible for spiritually dead people to follow Christ who do not possess God's life and who are bound to the shackles

of sin and Satan (Eph. 2:1-2). Conversion is not making Christ Lord over every area of your life. Lost sinners are spiritually dead and cannot make Jesus Lord of ***any*** area of their lives, much less ***every*** area!

This is indeed an impossible dream that could never come true for any unsaved person who lacks God's power to live victoriously over sin and Satan. In order to live differently a person must be born again (John 3:3). A person needs new life before he can experience the wonder of sanctification and transformation in his life. Therefore, to ask an unsaved person to follow, obey, and make Jesus Lord over his life becomes an impossible task and dream. **A person cannot change <u>what</u> they do until they first change <u>who</u> they are.** No person who is at enmity with God can possibly promise to serve Christ, obey Him, and make Him Lord over every area of his life forever.

Romans 8:7-8 confirms this:
"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."

Dr. H.A. Ironside once said:
"We cannot live the life until first we possess it."

Dr. Chafer used to say:
"Dead man cannot live until they first have life."

Unsaved people might wonder, "I've tried to reform my life many times, but it did not work." "I've wanted to do what was right but could never really change." "I always end up in the same rut after trying to make new strides in my life." "I'm nothing but a loser." The poor lost sinner under sin's power knows he cannot please God by his efforts which are related to reformation. Proclaiming the message of Lordship Salvation to unregenerate people is a dream that has no reality attached to it. **Unsaved people can't possibly make Jesus Lord of their lives! Satan has them imprisoned in his evil clutches (Heb. 2:14-15).**

The only hope that any sinner has is to cast himself upon the mercy of God (Luke 18:13) for deliverance from sin's penalty and Satan's power. Jesus came to set the captive free (Luke 4:18). The liberty or freedom comes after salvation (John 8:36). Jesus calls people to come to Him in simple faith (Matt. 11:28) so they might be relieved of the heavy burden of sin and find peace and rest for their souls. **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 (Rev. 22:17) so they can be delivered from the power of sin and Satan.

God's Unconditional Love

God's love for poor lost sinners is unconditional. He does not demand the sinner to meet specific requirements in order to be saved. God never demands nor gives sinners ultimatums before He will meet them in salvation. **Salvation is not about conditions. It's about God's unconditional love for the sinner (Rom. 5:8).** God the Father accepts us with His unconditional love. The parable of the prodigal Son is designed to teach us this wonderful truth.

Luke 15:20
"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

The father in this parable, who represents God the Heavenly Father, received back his son with no questions asked. He expressed unconditional love and forgiveness to him. The son in the parable represents the lost or unsaved sinner who needs God's salvation (Luke 15:10, 32). The picture of

God’s unconditional love in salvation is clearly drawn from the parable. **The Father did not bargain with the son and demanded the son promise that he would serve, obey, and follow him the rest of his life. The Father simply embraced the son and gave him the very best he had to offer (Luke 15:22).**

What a beautiful picture of God’s unconditional love for lost sinners! Isn’t the love of Jesus something wonderful? Sinners doomed for hell come to Him and He accepts them, just as they are, without any conditions! Furthermore, God gives to them the very best that He has which is salvation from hell and eternal life. Those who embrace Lordship Salvation have forgotten the wonder of God’s unconditional love and how, like the prodigal son, God embraces sinners with His total acceptance and lavish forgiveness. God loves us and freely gives to us salvation through His beloved Son (John 3:16).

God loves, gives, and forgives! No conditions and no questions asked. Furthermore, when a person embraces God’s love and grace through the salvation of Jesus Christ nothing will ever separate us from His unconditional love (Rom. 8:38-39) – not our lack of commitment, service, discipleship, transformation, or all the demons of hell!

“There will never be a sweeter story,
Story of the Savior's love divine,
Love that bro't Him from the realms of Glory,
Just to save a sinful soul like mine.

Boundless as the universe around me,
Reaching to the farthest soul away,
Saving, keeping love it was that found me,
That is why my heart can truly say;

Isn't the love of Jesus something wonderful,
Wonderful, wonderful.
O isn't the love of Jesus something wonderful,
Wonderful it is to me.”

Just As I Am

Just as I am without one plea! I'm still singing it! This is how we come to Jesus Christ for salvation. Jesus promises that "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). We come just as we are – a lost hell-bound sinner! We come as a person who is bound to sin's shackles and Satan's power. In order to be saved, we must come to Christ as a broken and empty sinner, who is willing to repent of his sin and redirect his life toward God (1 Thess. 1:9-10). **We come just as we are. 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.

Revelation 22:17 again states:
"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."

Eternal life is free for the taking. It's a gift. It's free. **It's absolutely free!**

Isaiah 55:1
"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

"Nothing in my hands I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling.
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die!

D.L. Moody used to say this concerning salvation:
“Take it as you take the air into your lungs. It is free, absolutely free.”

There are no discipleship programs, pledges, or promises that one must make to God in order to receive this wonderful gift. All one needs to do is come as a broken repentant sinner and receive the free gift through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The great hymn is worth repeating.

“Just as I am! without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
Just as I am! Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!”

Just come! There are no requirements or papers to sign. There is no blueprint to follow. There are no questions. There are no promises that must be made. There are no pleas, bargains, contracts, or issues that must be settled with God. Just come! Come with a broken heart over your sin and come ready to receive the free gift of salvation.

John 7:37
“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”

The difference between "coming to Christ" and "trying to come" has been frequently discussed. "Have you come to Christ?" said a minister one day to a thoughtful young man. "No; but I'm trying to come" was the answer. "And how long are you going to try before you come?" "I don't know; but I am doing what I can." The young man was confused and asked one more question: "But does not Christ say, 'Come'?" The minister replied, "Yes, but He does not say, 'Try to come’."

The lesson is simple. **In relationship to salvation, you cannot <u>try</u> and <u>trust</u> at the same time.** The teaching of Lordship Salvation wants a person to try and come to Christ through discipleship requirements and trust in Christ for

his salvation at the same time. However, the two approaches cancel out each other (Rom. 11:6). You cannot try and trust at the same time. Jesus does not call us to come and try, but just to come!

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