

LORDSHIP SALVATION:

A Forgotten Truth or a False Doctrine?



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LORDSHIP SALVATION: A FORGOTTEN TRUTH OR A FALSE DOCTRINE?

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INTRODUCTION

If you were Satan, which doctrine would you want to undermine? Which area of theology would you pervert, thus preventing people from turning to Christ? An individual may be wrong about the doctrine of the church and still be saved. A person may deny the pretribulational rapture or Millennial Kingdom and yet be gloriously redeemed. However, if a person is wrong on the doctrine of salvation, specifically, the prerequisites for salvation, he is eternally lost. One would indeed expect Satan to attack in the area of soteriology.

The Apostle Paul enjoins the Corinthians not to let Satan get an advantage over them, "For we are not ignorant concerning his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan's device is to counterfeit the work of God. Satan is expert in counterfeiting the Gospel of Grace with a gospel that is so close to the real Gospel and yet is a counterfeit one leading to eternal condemnation. Whereas several decades ago Satan used liberalism to undermine the truth, more recently Satan appears to have penetrated evangelicalism with his false gospel.

1A. THE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM OF LORDSHIP SALVATION

1b. The situation:

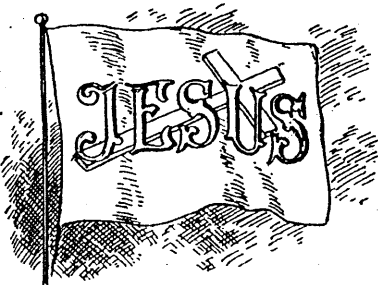
The informed and discerning believer soon realizes that there is a battle raging in American Christendom over the matter of the prerequisites for salvation. On the one hand, there are those who insist that salvation is God's gift and that trust in Christ is the only requirement for salvation. On the other hand, there are respected pastors and theologians who teach that unless an individual submits also to the Lordship of Christ at the moment he believes, he is not really saved.

1c. The issue at stake:

A great many peripheral issues, important as they are, have clouded many times the real issue in the discussion.

1d. What the issue is not:

- 1e. The issue is not whether the recognition of Christ's Lordship in the believer's life is important. All would agree that the matter is of crucial significance for the Christian life.
- 2e. The issue is not whether Lordship is desirable at the moment of salvation or as soon as possible after salvation. A commitment of



obedience to Christ early in the Christian experience is most commendable.

- 3e. The issue is not whether individuals claiming to be Christians but showing no evidence of salvation were actually ever saved. This perplexing question is important but not primary to the discussion.
- 4e. The issue is not whether repentance is part of saving faith. All admit that the Bible clearly teaches the necessity of repentance for salvation (Lk. 24:47), but there is a decided difference of opinion how repentance should be defined.
- 5e. The issue is not simply one of semantics with individuals on both sides of the issue really speaking about the same thing, though expressing it differently. At stake is a deep doctrinal difference.

2d. What the issue is:

At stake is the essence of the evangel. The basic question relates to the sine qua non of saving faith. What does an individual have to believe or do to be genuinely saved? Is faith the only requirement for salvation or are Lordship advocates correct when they say that a recognition of Christ's absolute control is necessary to salvation?

2c. The importance of the question:

Zondervan Publishing House, in advertising on its display rack both MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus* and Hodges' *Absolutely Free!*, put the matter very succinctly by asking the following: DOES SALVATION REQUIRE MORE THAN BELIEF IN CHRIST? MacArthur says YES. Hodges says NO.

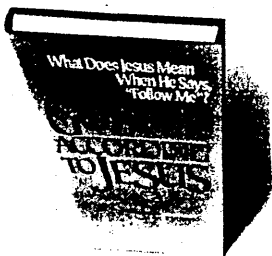
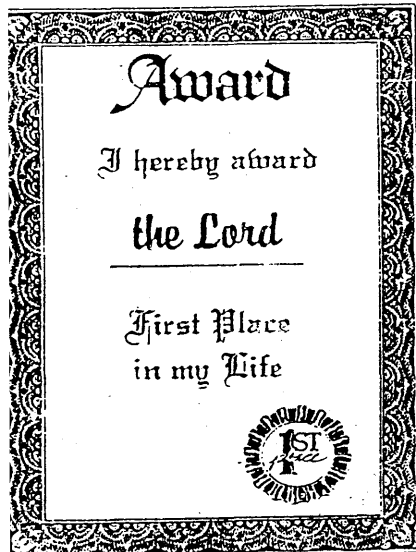
Is MacArthur correct with his unequivocal statement?

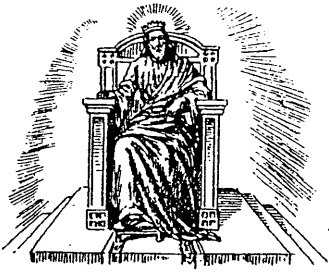
"The call to Calvary must be recognized for what it is: a call to discipleship under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. To respond to that call is to become a believer. Anything less is simply unbelief" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 30).

MacArthur maintains: "Thus there is no salvation except 'lordship' salvation" (*Ibid.*, p. 28).

Or is Hodges correct who numbers himself "among those who believe that the moment of simple faith in Christ for eternal life is the very point at which God and human beings can meet. And in that moment of meeting, one's destiny is permanently settled and the miraculous life of eternity itself is created within" (*Absolutely Free!*, p. xiv).

3c. The immediacy of the problem:





Both positions cannot be correct. Either salvation is absolutely free or it costs everything. There is no more important question for man than the one posed by the contemporary debate: How is an individual saved?

1d. Evangelicalism is divided on Lordship:

James Montgomery Boice advocates Lordship salvation in *Moody Monthly*. Michael Cocoris refutes it in *Realife*.

2d. Fundamentalism differs on Lordship salvation:

On the one hand, the *Biblical Evangelist* publishes articles espousing Lordship salvation; on the other hand, the editor of the *Sword of the Lord*, Curtis Hutson, rejects Lordship salvation as a false gospel.

3d. The GARBC disagrees over the matter of Lordship salvation:



John Balyo and Paul Tassell, both writing for the *Baptist Bulletin*, espouse different positions.

John Balyo equates the Saviorhood of Christ with His Lordship:

"If there is no submission to the will of God and no performance of the will of God, a person is not a genuine believer." He holds that "saving faith properly understood always is both trusting Christ with one's life. . . (and) confidence in Christ to both save and manage one's life. Superficial faith never saved anyone" (*Baptist Bulletin*, March 1987, p. 7).

In contrast, Paul Tassell pleads that we not confuse "the instantaneous act of salvation with the long progress of progressive sanctification. We must not confuse our deliverance from sin with discipleship. We must not make saviorship and lordship synonymous" (*Baptist Bulletin*, Feb. 1989, p. 46).



The problem is immediate. It has not just affected evangelicalism, but fundamentalism, indeed our beloved GARBC fellowship. The question is important. Charles Ryrie sees the issue clearly:

"Confusion about salvation means disaster, for the message of the Gospel is a matter of eternal life or eternal death. 'What is the Gospel?' is not an academic question. It affects the destiny of every lost sinner as well as the activity of every witnessing Christian, every soul-winning ministry" (*So Great Salvation*, p. 9).

2b. The sides:

The listing below of representatives of Lordship salvation and free grace proponents is by no means exhaustive. Both sides can boast outstanding theologians. Their dedication is not the issue. The total difference in their definition of the Gospel is.

1c. Lordship salvation:



J.I. PACKER

1d. J. I. Packer:

In his well-known volume, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, the British theologian asks this concerning erroneous ways of salvation:

"Or will it leave them supposing that all they have to do is to trust Christ as a sin-bearer, not realizing that they must also deny themselves and enthrone Him as their Lord (the error which we might call only-believism)?" (p. 89)

2d. Walter J. Chantry:

Chantry says that salvation without Lordship is impossible:

"Practical acknowledgement of Jesus' Lordship, yielding to His rule by following, is the very fibre of saving faith. It is only those who 'confess with the mouth the *Lord Jesus*' (Romans 10:9) that shall be saved. . . . Without obedience, you shall not see life! Unless you bow to Christ's scepter, you will not receive the benefits of Christ's sacrifice" (*Today's Gospel Authentic or Synthetic?* p. 60, italics in the original).

His words concerning those who preach simple faith in Christ are very strong:

"This heretical and soul-destroying practice is the logical conclusion of a system that thinks little of God, preaches no law, calls for no repentance, waters down faith to 'accepting a gift,' and never mentions bowing to Christ's rule or bearing a cross" (p. 68).

3d. John R. Stott:

Stott suggests a person who does not recognize the Lordship of Christ at salvation cannot be saved:

"I am suggesting, therefore, that it is as unbiblical as it is unrealistic to divorce the Lordship from the Saviorhood of Jesus Christ" ("Must Christ Be Lord to Be Savior?—Yes," *Eternity*, Sept. 1959, p. 37).

4d. James Montgomery Boice:

Boice calls the concept of salvation through faith alone "a defective theology that has crept over us like a deadening fog. This theology separates faith from discipleship and grace from obedience. It teaches that Jesus can be received as one's Savior without being received as one's Lord" ("The Meaning of Discipleship," *Moody Monthly*, Feb. 1986, p. 34).





R.C. SPROUL

5d. R. C. Sproul:

Sproul speaks of a false dichotomy that threatens evangelical theology. He is glad that "MacArthur exposes the current departure from the orthodox Christian view of justification, which fosters a widespread epidemic of antinomianism" (MacArthur, *The Gospel*. . . , back flap).

6d. A. W. Tozer:

Tozer labels the view of salvation by grace alone "a notable heresy": "I must be frank in saying that a notable heresy has permeated our evangelical Christian circles. The widely-accepted concept that we can choose to accept Christ only because we need Him as Savior and that we have the right to postpone our obedience to Him as Lord as long as we want to" ("I Call It Heresy!" *Masterpiece*, Fall 1988, p. 22; cf. the book by the same title, pp. 9,19).

I CALL IT HERESY!

B Y A . W . T O Z E R

7d. Vance Havner:

This gifted preacher, commenting on Romans 10:9, says that Saviorhood and Lordship are inseparable:

"When an early Christian said Jesus was Lord, he meant it. They had never partitioned saviorhood from lordship in those days. You did not take Jesus as Saviour and then 25 years later in a dedication meeting take Him as Lord. They didn't know anything about that. It happened all at once" ("Jesus Christ Is Lord," *Fundamentalist Journal*, April 1987, p. 25).

8d. D. James Kennedy:

This well-known pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, takes a firm Lordship position. In a printed sermon entitled, "The Lordship of Christ" he states:

"Jesus will not be the Saviour where He is not Lord. Do not be deceived. He will not be Lord at all if He cannot be Lord of all. . . . My friends, Jesus is not Savior where Jesus is not Lord" (pp. 4,7).

9d. John MacArthur:

In *The Gospel According to Jesus*, MacArthur states very clearly that Lordship is a requirement for salvation:

"Forsaking one's self for Christ's sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion: it is the *sine qua non* of saving faith" (p. 135).



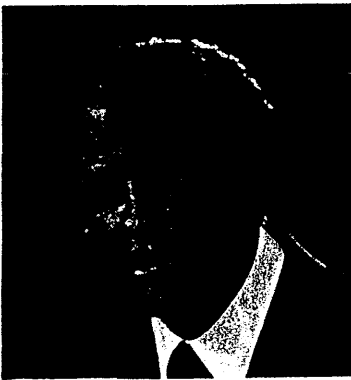
MacArthur: Opposes "easy believism."

In the respected periodical, *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, MacArthur writes on "Faith According to the Apostle James." Robert Saucy and Earl Radmacher give their response—both of them documenting their disappointment over MacArthur's mishandling of Scripture. Radmacher sadly concludes:

"I fear that some current definitions of faith and repentance are not paving the road back to Wittenberg but, rather, paving the road back to Rome. Justification is becoming 'to make righteous' rather than 'to declare righteous.' Repentance is becoming 'penitence' (if not 'penance') rather than 'changing the mind.' And 'faith' is receiving more analysis and scrutinizing rather than the 'object of faith'" (*JETS*, March 1990, pp. 40-41).

10d. Billy Graham:

Attentive listeners will note that Dr. Graham concludes almost every one of his broadcasts or telecasts with words such as these:



"Unless you make Jesus the Savior, Lord and Master of your life, you cannot be saved. Accept Him now as your Savior and Lord, give your life over to Him, and He will save you."

Virtually any of Dr. Graham's sermons reproduced in *Decision* conclude with an offer of the Gospel which involves submission to Christ as the necessary prerequisite for salvation. Here is the conclusion of a typical message:

"There is also a form of hell in this life . . . that is because you are separated from God's love. You haven't totally surrendered to him as Savior and Lord. . . . Many people ask me how they can know Christ and how they can be sure that they are saved. . . . Can you say, 'I am going to heaven'? If you have any doubt about it, you can settle it by surrendering your life to him. You can do that right now" ("Not Drugs . . . Christ!" *Decision*, July-August 1990 p. 3).

2c. Salvation by faith alone:

1d. Lewis Sperry Chafer:

Chafer writes that Lordship salvation is a seemingly pious but subtle error that in addition to believing in Christ "the unsaved must dedicate themselves to the will of God" (*Systematic Theology*, III, 384).

2d. Zane Hodges:

Hodges clearly distinguishes between salvation and discipleship: "Eternal life is free. Discipleship is immeasurably hard. The former is attained by faith



alone, the latter by a faith that works" (*The Hungry Inherit*, p. 114, underscore in the original).

3d. Charles C. Ryrie:



Ryrie cautions that "To teach that Christ must be Lord of Life in order to be Savior is to confuse certain aspects of discipleship" and confuses the gospel of the Grace of God with the words of men. (*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 178).

4d. J. Dwight Pentecost:

Pentecost, answering the question about how one becomes a Christian, very clearly states that salvation is by faith alone: "When one receives Jesus Christ as Savior he is receiving One who is already Lord. That's why we address Him as 'Lord Jesus Christ.' Salvation, however, is in no way dependent on making Christ Lord in every area of one's life and then living under that Lordship. That would require a 'newborn babe' (1 Pet. 2:2) to assume a role he is incapable of fulfilling in order to 'prove' he qualifies for salvation. One must make a distinction between salvation and discipleship, just as Paul did when he wrote to young believers and encouraged them to make personal discipleship decisions based on the salvation they already possessed (see Eph. 4:17-24). The requirements for the two are different" (*Kindred Spirit*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter 1988) pp. 3,11).

5d. Curtis Hutson:



The editor of the *Sword of the Lord* has published a book of evangelistic sermons, with one chapter entitled "Lordship Salvation, A Perversion of the Gospel." After opening with Galatians 1:1-9, Hutson begins as follows:

"Lordship salvation is an unscriptural teaching regarding the doctrine of salvation and is confusing to Christians" (*Salvation Crystal Clear*, p. 301). He calls Lordship salvation "another gospel" which contradicts the teaching of salvation by grace through faith (p. 302).

6d. Michael Cocoris:

Cocoris, after discussing the concepts of repentance, faith, Lord, disciple and the story of the rich young ruler, asks in conclusion:

"What must I do to be saved? Is Lordship salvation the answer? No. The biblical answer is, 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31). That is the good news we are to preach, that others may come to know the gift of God and the God of the gift of eternal life. Don't confuse the issue and thus mislead sinners. Make the message clear and plain that

sinners may be saved by grace through faith" ("Lordship Salvation—Is It Biblical?" *Realife*, May/June 1980, p. 11).

7d. Renald Showers:

Showers, writing in the *Word of Life 1990 Annual*, states:

"Some claim salvation requires a person to receive Christ as Savior and make Him Master over his life. But in light of the distinction between Christ's functions as Savior and Master, this claim comes dangerously close to the idea that salvation is not through the redemptive work of Christ alone" ("The Trouble With Lordship Salvation," p. 19).

3b. The seriousness:

Which side is right; which is wrong? There seems to be no middle ground possible (although Darrel L. Bock, in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June 1986, attempts such in his article, "Jesus as Lord in Acts and in the Gospel Message.")

Charles C. Ryrie shows the seriousness of the issue:

"The importance of this question cannot be overestimated in relation to both salvation and sanctification. The message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel; therefore, one of them is a false gospel and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), and this is a very serious matter. As far as sanctification is concerned, if only committed people are saved people, then where is there room for carnal Christians? Or if willingness alone is required at the moment of salvation, to what extent is this willingness necessary?" (*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 170).

2A. THE CENTRAL PROOFS AGAINST LORDSHIP SALVATION:

1b. The example of uncommitted believers:

1c. Lot: A life-long rejection of the Lordship of God.

Abraham's nephew Lot is an example of a selfish, unyielded kind of life. His compromise in Sodom, his questioning of God's message of warning, his drunkenness and incest do not suggest that he was a believer. If it were not for the reference to Lot in 2 Peter 2:7-8 where three times he is called righteous (translated "just" in v. 7), one could seriously question his salvation. Life-long disobedience does not prevent a man from being positionally righteous.

2c. The Ephesian believers: Unyieldedness at the time of salvation.

During Paul's third missionary journey, many were converted from a life of paganism, superstition and witchcraft. According to Acts 19:18-19 more than two



years elapsed after Paul had gone to Ephesus when many who had believed earlier (perfect tense), burned their books of magic. The burning did not take place as soon as they believed. As believers they had continued their pagan practices for at least one and a half years. "Yet their unwillingness to give it up did not prevent their becoming believers. Their salvation did not depend on faith plus willingness to submit to the lordship of Christ in the matter of using magical arts. Their salvation came through faith alone even though for months and years afterward many of them practiced that which they knew to be wrong" (*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 172).

3c. Peter: A definite lapse from total dedication.

Peter's words in Acts 10:14, "Not so, Lord" show at least a temporary lapse in his yieldedness. That lapse took place after his being Spirit-filled on the day of Pentecost. If Christ must be Lord of the life in order for one to be saved, then one might well conclude that Peter was never genuinely saved or that he lost his salvation when he rejected the Lordship of Christ in this specific instance. Ryrie observes that "Such examples would seem to settle the issue clearly by indicating that faith alone is the requirement for eternal life. This is not to say that dedication of life is not expected of believers, but it is to say that it is not one of the conditions for salvation" (*Ibid.*, 170).

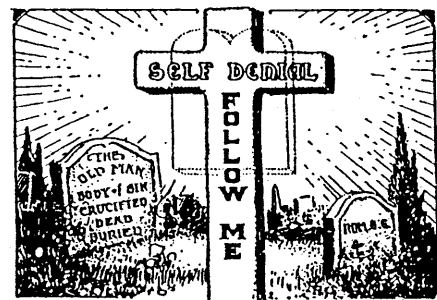
2b. The meaning of the title "Lord":

Ryrie's summary of the various meanings of the term "lord" is very helpful:

"But, someone may ask, doesn't Lord mean Master, and doesn't receiving Jesus as Lord mean as Master of one's life? To be sure, Lord does mean Master, but in the New Testament it also means God (Acts 3:22), owner (Luke 19:33), sir (John 4:11), man-made idols (1 Cor. 8:5), and even one's husband (1 Peter 3:6). When it is used in relation to Jesus in the New Testament, it can have an ordinary meaning of a title of respect (as in John 4), but it must also have had some unusual connotation which caused some to question its validity. And such a meaning could only be God" (*Ibid.*, p. 173).

Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:3 that "no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." Lord in context must mean Jehovah-God since unsaved people can call Jesus "Lord," meaning Sir.

No one but a God-Man can save. But deity and humanity must be combined to provide an effective salvation. It is the confession of Jesus as Lord, that is, Jesus the God-Man, that saves. The Jews needed to put their faith in one who was more than man, One who by His resurrection and ascension demonstrated that He is both Lord, God and Christ, the Messiah. Romans 10:9-10 emphasizes this truth: "That if thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus. . . thou shalt be saved." The Jews needed to believe in the God-Man, their promised Messiah. When Lord is used in a soteriological context, the meaning is clearly God rather than Master.



THE LAW OF THE CROSS

3b. The exhortation of Romans 12:1-2:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The Apostle Paul pleads with believers to submit to the Lordship of Christ. These individuals had been justified by faith (Rom. 5:1), were being led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14) and would never be separated from the love of God (Rom. 8:39). Yet these believers were enjoined to "present their bodies a living sacrifice." Paul presumed that these who had received the plentiful mercies of God needed to present themselves to be used of the Master. *If Lordship were a requirement for salvation, these individuals would not have been saved until the moment of dedication.* Clearly, the Rom. 12:1-2 passage is addressed to believers. It is strange that this key passage on discipleship and dedication is nowhere discussed by MacArthur in *The Gospel According to Jesus*, a book dealing with commitment and consecration. This passage argues most forcefully against the Lordship position. Believers are addressed to present their bodies. The Greek tense of "present" refers to a once-for-all action. They are clearly saved but have not absolutely surrendered. In contrast to what Paul clearly teaches, MacArthur says:

"Forsaking oneself for Christ's sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion: it is the *sina qua non* of saving faith" (*The Gospel. . .*, p. 135).



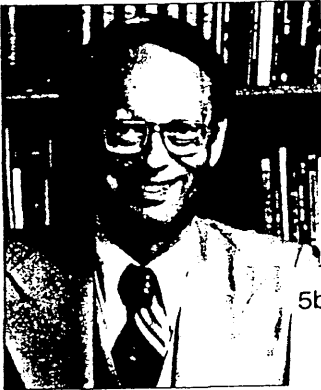
Paul says, Because you have been saved and abundantly blessed by God, surrender yourself to Him. MacArthur says, "Unconditional surrender, a complete resignation of self and absolute submission . . . is the essence of saving faith" (*ibid.*, p. 153). Paul says, Because God saved you, be willing to submit to Him. Who is right, MacArthur or Paul? In a sense, the whole issue of Lordship salvation can be decided on the interpretation of this classic passage. Does Paul address unbelievers? If so, Lordship salvation stands. If he addresses believers, then discipleship is not a prerequisite for but a product of salvation.

Some believers may dedicate their lives to the Lord at the moment of salvation. The Apostle Paul immediately after salvation asks the question: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). With most believers—and we all know this from personal experience—dedication takes place after a fuller understanding of our spiritual responsibility. With dedication we begin our path of discipleship leading to Christlikeness.

4b. The expression "easy believism":

Those who insist on Lordship salvation maintain that those who teach salvation through faith alone advocate "easy believism" or "cheap grace" (Boice, p. 35).

The New Testament contains over 200 references in which the requirement for salvation is given as faith alone in Christ as our substitute. But while faith is the only condition for salvation, it is not easy to believe. Dr. Ryrie shows why "easy believism" is a totally misapplied term:



Ryrie

"Though my view has been dubbed 'easy believism,' it is not easy to believe, because what we ask the unsaved person to believe is not easy. We ask that they trust a person who lived 2,000 years ago, whom he can only know through the Bible, to forgive his sins. We are asking that he stake his eternal destiny on this. Remember the example of Evangelist Jesus. He did not require the Samaritan woman to set her sinful life in order, or even be willing to, so that she could be saved. He did not set out before her what would be expected by way of changes in her life if she believed. He simply said she needs to know who He is and to ask for the gift of eternal life" (John 4:10). (*Basic Theology*, p. 339)

5b. The fact of spiritual inability:

It should be noted that the Lordship salvation view has a very watered-down view of the sinfulness of man. It assumes that unregenerate man has the power to respond with total commitment before salvation, something which only the Holy Spirit can accomplish through the new nature.

Hodges observes correctly that, "MacArthur apparently holds the Reformed view that regeneration logically *precedes* saving faith" (*Absolutely Free!*, p. 219. Italics in the original). MacArthur has spiritual sight logically preceding saving faith, for he says, "Spiritual sight is a gift from God that makes one willing and able to believe" (*The Gospel*. . . , p. 75).

Despite MacArthur's claim that he is "a traditional premillennial dispensationalist" (*Ibid.*, p. 25), in his doctrine of salvation he evidences tendencies of Reformed theology. Pickering also agrees with this appraisal:

"There is a pre-salvation work of the Holy Spirit which may be called a quickening. In Lydia's case, the Lord opened her heart to believe (Acts 16:14). An awareness of sin is vastly different from an ability and a desire to submit, as Reformed theologians posit, who suggest a presalvation regeneration" (*Lordship Salvation*, p. 2).

In this matter of human inability before salvation, it would be well to heed Chafer's words:

"The unregenerate person, because of his condition in spiritual death, has no ability to desire the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14), or to anticipate what his outlook on life will be after he is saved. It is therefore an error of the first magnitude to divert that feeble ability of the unsaved to exercise a God-given faith for salvation into the unknown and complex spheres of self-dedication, which dedication is the Christian's greatest problem" (cited in the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1988, p. 50).

Similarly, Renald Showers writes:

"The unsaved cannot and do not submit to the divine rule (Romans 8:7). Just as a tree cannot have apples unless it already has the nature of an apple tree, so a person cannot have a willingness and desire to submit to Christ's rule unless he already possesses the new nature received by regeneration at salvation (2 Peter 1:3-4). Thus, even the

willingness and desire to submit to Christ's rule are the result of, and not a requirement for, salvation" (*Word of Life 1990 Annual*, "The Trouble With Lordship Salvation," p. 19).

6b. The difference between a saint and a disciple:

It costs absolutely nothing to be a Christian. It costs everything to be a disciple. In Luke 14 the Lord distinguished between salvation and discipleship while teaching two parables, side by side. In Luke 14:16-24 he related the parable of the great supper into which the entrance was free and unrestricted for all who followed the invitation. In Luke 14:25-33 Christ taught that discipleship was only for those who gave up all.

Ryrie underscores the sharp contrast between the two parables of Luke 14:

"Whereas the story of the banquet says 'come' and 'free,' the next says 'stop' and 'costly.' What is free? The invitation to enter the Father's kingdom. What is costly? A certain kind of discipleship. . . . The contrast between these two sayings of our Lord could not be more vivid. Come to the banquet. It's free. Don't rush into discipleship. It's costly" (*So Great Salvation*, 75-76). Being a Christian means following an invitation. Being a disciple means forsaking all. To confuse these two aspects of the Christian life is to confound the grace of God and the works of man. The Gospel of grace is scriptural. The gospel that adds the works of man to salvation is a counterfeit gospel.

3A. THE CURRENT PUBLICATIONS ON LORDSHIP SALVATION:

1b. Books on Lordship salvation:

1c. John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*.

The cover jacket states the basic premise of the book: "*The Gospel According to Jesus* clearly teaches that there is no eternal life without surrender to the Lordship of Christ." The well-known Bible expositor also taught essentially the content of his book on the "Grace to You" Hour. The evangelical world is, in a sense, indebted to MacArthur for bringing national attention to the confusion in the Church concerning this most important issue, the nature of the Gospel. MacArthur rightly sees that there are "two conflicting messages from the same conservative, fundamentalist, and evangelical camp" (xiv). He agrees that "whoever is wrong on this question is proclaiming a message that can send people to hell" (Ibid.).

Some reviewers of MacArthur's book have understood him to say that a believer needs to be willing to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ at the moment of salvation. Hodges sees very clearly that MacArthur's main point is that submission to Christ, not a willingness to submit, is a prerequisite for salvation and gives the following quotations from MacArthur's book:

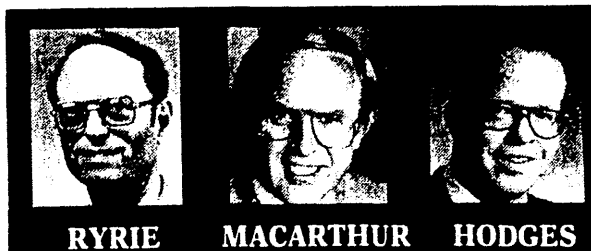
This radical redefinition of saving faith is illustrated by such statements as these from MacArthur:

"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" (p. 135).

SO GREAT SALVATION
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"He is glad to give up all for the kingdom. That is the nature of saving faith" (p. 139).

"His demeanor was one of unconditional surrender, a complete resignation of self and absolute submission to his father. That is the essence of saving faith" (p. 153).

"A concept of faith that excludes obedience corrupts the message of salvation" (p. 174).

"So-called 'faith' in God that does not produce this yearning to submit to His will is not faith at all. The state of mind that refuses obedience is pure and simple unbelief" (p. 176).

Not one of these statements is a true reflection of the biblical doctrine of saving faith. What these claims in fact reveal is a deep-seated fear of the total freeness of God's saving grace, as though that freeness subverted morality. On the contrary, it is precisely the wondrous unconditional love of God that is the root and cause of all New Testament holiness.

(Hodges, p. 250)

2c. Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*:

The book, as Hodges sees it, "is first and foremost a tribute to the perfect freeness of God's saving grace" and an effort "to set this gospel in clear relief" (xiv).

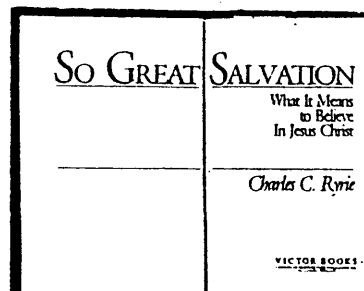
Hodges is clearly agitated by the treatment he receives in MacArthur's book. He resents being misquoted, misunderstood and misrepresented (pp. 205-206). Here is his burden:

"Let it be clearly said: *lordship salvation holds a doctrine of saving faith that is in conflict with that of Luther and Calvin and, most importantly, in conflict with God's Word*" (p. 209, italics in original).

3c. Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*:

Ryrie's book is not a direct rebuttal of MacArthur, but it certainly deals with the issues raised by Lordship salvation. Concepts like grace, the Gospel, faith, Lordship repentance, discipleship and security are treated in Ryrie's typically clear, concise and courteous style. Most helpful is his treatment of carnality, especially since MacArthur accuses dispensationalists of inventing "this dichotomy carnal/spiritual Christian" (p. 30). "Contemporary theologians have fabricated an entire category for this type of person—'Carnal Christian'" (p. 129).

Ryrie distinguishes between Saviorhood and Lordship. He correctly differentiates between the two ideas by observing that "Saved people need to be dedicated, but dedication is not a requirement for being saved" (p. 74).



Ryrie further notes that "the issue of mastery over life is not involved in receiving the gift of eternal life. It is very much involved in God's desire for His children, but facing and deciding that issue does not bring us into the family of God" (p. 109).

4c. John MacArthur, *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles*:

In this sequel to his earlier book, MacArthur interacts with the responses to *The Gospel According to Jesus*. He continues to defend the view that commitment of one's life to Christ is a condition of eternal salvation (pp. 204-205, 110). Further, despite his claim to be a dispensationalist, he evidences Reformed tendencies as he suggests that regeneration precedes faith (pp. 61, 67), as he rejects the concept that the believer has an old and a new nature and as he writes of "The Myth of the Carnal Christian" (p. 125). He concludes that the "no-Lordship" position leads "to a sub-Christian antinomianism" (p. 233).

2b. Reviews of *The Gospel According to Jesus*:

It is most informative to read various reviews of MacArthur's book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, in the theological journals. Perhaps it is safe to assume that the review generally represents the position of the organization or institution which sponsors the publication. The reviews are listed in the order of agreement with, to disagreement with, MacArthur's position on the issue of Lordship salvation. The list is obviously selective.

1c. Homer A. Kent, *Grace Theological Journal* (Spring 1989), pp. 67-77.

Surprisingly this respected professor at Grace Theological Seminary agrees that Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9 "seem to support his (MacArthur's) contention that anything less than a belief in Jesus as one's Lord does not fulfill the Biblical instruction" (p. 69). He also joins MacArthur in his criticism of Ryrie because the latter "does not seem to view commitment as an integral part of faith" (Ibid.).

2c. Rolland D. McCune, *The Sentinel* (Spring 1989), p. 3.

The President of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary concurs with MacArthur's position and thinks that he makes a convincing case that saving faith . . . involves a volitional surrender and submission to Him as the sovereign Savior. McCune appears to agree with MacArthur's attack on L. S. Chafer, Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges whose "rather recent approach to salvation and Christian living . . . is really a divergent view of salvation that offers a false hope, and that much of our weak Christianity today can be attributed to it."



ROLLAND D. McCUNE

3c. Darrell L. Bock, *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January-March 1989), pp. 21-39.

Bock is Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is somewhat critical but primarily sympathetic in his evaluation of MacArthur's book. His main effort seems to be to explain MacArthur because, says Bock, "there is often a difference between what MacArthur says and what he



apparently means" (p. 22, italics in the original). Bock attempts a synthesis between the two sides of the issue and places MacArthur and Chafer basically in the same camp.

Zane Hodges, reviewing Bock's review, notes that Bock's position in the review, which was elevated to the status of a major article, "is a clear and distinct departure from the seminary's prevailing historical position on salvation" (*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, (Spring 1989), p. 83).

It must be said by way of balancing the picture of Dallas Theological Seminary that Roy B. Zuck, Academic Dean and editor of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, takes a strong position against Lordship salvation:

"The Lordship view does not clarify the distinction between sanctification and justification, or between discipleship and sonship. It mixes the condition with the consequences. It confuses *becoming* a Christian with *being* a Christian. . . . Regeneration pertains to one's relationship to Christ as Savior from sin. Sanctification, on the other hand, pertains to one's relationship to Christ as his Lord and Master. In the new birth a person is made a new creation in Christ; in sanctification he grows in that relationship. . . . If a person must *do* something to be saved, he is adding to salvation. . . . Repeatedly the Bible clearly states that salvation comes only by receiving it by faith. . . . To add to faith, to add to receiving God's gift of eternal life is to alter the gospel" (*Kindred Spirits*, Summer 1989, p. 6).

- 4c. Harold Freeman, *Calvary Review* (Fall 1988), pp. 13-14.

Freeman, who is Vice President for Public Ministries and Alumni Affairs at Calvary Bible College in Kansas City, Missouri, rightly notes the various straw men attacked by MacArthur and shows MacArthur's dispensational inconsistency manifested in his failure to distinguish between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace. However, Freeman does not address the main issue at stake, that of MacArthur making submission and discipleship a prerequisite for salvation.

- 5c. J. Kevin Butcher, *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Spring 1989), pp. 27-43.

Butcher, who is pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, writes a critique of *The Gospel According to Jesus*, dealing with the numerous technical and theological problems raised by the book. His criticisms are grouped under the categories of "Inaccurate Understanding of the Free Grace Position," "Inadequate and Improper Methods of Validation," "Theological Weaknesses," "Practical Errors" and "Logical Difficulties."

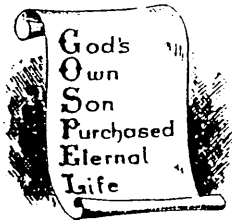
- 6c. Ernest Pickering, *Lordship Salvation*. Central Press, p. 7.

The former president of Central Baptist Seminary and pastor of Fourth Baptist Church in Minneapolis and present Deputation Director of Baptist World Mission



Ernest Pickering

was possibly the first person in print with a critical review of MacArthur's book. It is a well-written and well-reasoned review of the controversial work. His concluding remarks best summarize his position:



"None of us are happy with shoddy, fleshly, and disobedient Christians. But the remedy for this condition is not found in changing the terms of the gospel. Well over 100 times in the New Testament, we are told that salvation is by faith or through believing. It is a very serious matter to add an ingredient to the gospel of salvation which is not found in the New Testament. While one may argue that 'faith,' if properly understood, includes the ingredient of 'submission' or 'enthronement,' we believe the Scriptures do not support this contention. Our task is to keep preaching the plain, simple gospel of free grace. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce in true believers those qualities of righteousness which we all devoutly long to see" (p. 7).

- 7c. Robbins, John W. "The Gospel According to John MacArthur," *The Trinity Review*. Part 1, No. 98 (April 1993), pp. 1-4. Part 2, No. 99 (May 1993), pp. 1-4.

Robbins offers a critique of MacArthur's book from a Reformed perspective. He correctly observes that "MacArthur attacks justification by faith alone and suggests that works be understood as part of faith." He thus "rejects the Biblical view of justification and adopts the Roman Catholic view" (Part 1, pp. 1,2).

3b. Articles on the issue:

Since the publication of MacArthur's book, a number of articles have appeared in apparent response to the widely read work.

- 1c. *The Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*:

This periodical has appeared semi-annually since Autumn 1988. It represents the Grace Evangelical Society, whose purpose it is "to promote the clear proclamation of God's free salvation through faith alone in Christ alone, which is properly correlated with and distinguished from issues related to discipleship" (Autumn 1988, p. 4). Its articles, review of magazine articles and books relate primarily to grace and salvation and a clear Gospel presentation.

- 2c. *Word of Life 1990 Annual*:

Renald Showers, quoted above, writes on "The Trouble With Lordship Salvation" (pp. 18-19).

- 3c. *Realife*, Tennessee Temple University's magazine, published "Lordship Salvation—Is It Biblical?" by Michael Cocoris (May/June 1988), pp. 8-9, 11.

- 4c. *Bibliotheca Sacra*. "Has Lordship Salvation Been Taught throughout Church History?" by Thomas G. Lewellen (Jan-March 1990), pp. 55-69. Lewellen refutes

MacArthur's claim that Lordship salvation was uniformly taught in the ancient church and the concept of free grace is recent, therefore wrong.

- 5c. *The Biblical Evangelist* in its November 1, 1989 issue reproduced two chapters from the book *Defective Evangelism* by James Alexander Stewart, dealing with "both repentance and Lordship as ingredients in salvation" (p. 1). The editor of the *Biblical Evangelist* introduces the article with a warm endorsement: "We highly recommend this work."

In the article the contemporary deviation from Lordship salvation is called, "A complete perversion of the blessed evangel" which leads "to an adulterous gospel" and amounts to "SATAN'S MASTERPIECE" (p. 16, capitals in the original).

The Gospel is at the very core of our Christian faith. Lordship salvation offers one Gospel, free grace another. Each side calls the other position a perversion of the Gospel.

If it were ever necessary for believers to rightly divide the Word of truth, it is now—and it is in this area!

THE FORMULA OF FAITH

<p style="text-align: center;">EPHESIANS 2</p> <p>8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: <i>it is</i> the gift of God:</p> <p>9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.</p> <p>10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>8 τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι - For by grace ye are having been saved</p> <p>διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, through faith; and this not of you,</p> <p>θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· 9 οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ of [is] the gift; not of works, lest</p> <p>God</p> <p>τις καυχῆσθαι. 10 αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν anyone should boast. For of him we are</p> <p>ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ a product, created in Christ Jesus</p> <p>ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς, οἷς προητοίμασεν unto works good, which 'previously prepared</p> <p>ὁ θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν. - 'God in order that in them we might walk.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>correct view: Grace + Faith = Salvation + Works</p> <p>corrupt view: Grace + Faith + Works = Salvation</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>8 τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι - For by grace ye are having been saved</p> <p>διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, through faith; and this not of you,</p> <p>θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· 9 οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ of [is] the gift; not of works, lest</p> <p>God</p> <p>τις καυχῆσθαι. 10 αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν anyone should boast. For of him we are</p> <p>ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ a product, created in Christ Jesus</p> <p>ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς, οἷς προητοίμασεν unto works good, which 'previously prepared</p> <p>ὁ θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν. - 'God in order that in them we might walk.</p>	<p>correct view: Grace + Faith = Salvation + Works</p> <p>corrupt view: Grace + Faith + Works = Salvation</p>
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MK

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Lord of All?

by John G. Balyo

Is Jesus Christ the Lord of all Christians, or is He the Lord only of those who have acknowledged His lordship sometime after conversion? I confess that I am somewhat surprised that the issue has been raised at all. I never expected anyone to understand the Bible to teach that Jesus is the Savior of all Christians but the Lord of only a more spiritual group.

Is not the Word of God clear that no Christian is autonomous? If you have been saved by Christ, you are not your own because you are "bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). No Christian owns himself; he is the property of the Lord Who bought him and is, therefore, obligated to function under the lordship of Jesus Christ and obey Him. Are we to believe that a genuine convert can say, "Jesus is Lord, but He is not *my* Lord"?

Perhaps we need to give more serious heed to the Savior's words in Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven." We understand that no one does the will of God completely and that occasions of rebellion may occur in a true believer's life; but if there is no submission to the will of God and no performance of the will of God, a person is not a genuine believer. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). There should be no confusion here about mixing faith with works as a condition of salvation. Of course salvation is by God's grace and faith alone.

Faith, however, is something more than trusting Christ for the benefits of salvation; it is sufficient confidence in Christ to commit one's life to Him. How can one receive Christ and the salvation He offers, and at the same time have no thought of obeying Him? He will not perfectly obey Christ anymore than

married persons perfectly honor their marriage vows, but obedience to Christ should be his intent and should be demonstrated in a significant way in his life. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new (creation)" (2 Cor. 5:17). Surely that newness must eventually manifest itself in a meaningful way. If old things never pass away and nothing becomes new in a person's life, obviously nothing happened.

The effort to separate salvation and discipleship is futile. "My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me," said Jesus. Yes, we know that true believers wander at times, but "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not (as the practice of his life); but he that is begotten of God (guards) himself . . ." (1 John 5:18). It will not do to say that a saved person need never accept the lordship of his God by citing examples of backsliders. It has been said that Lot was a righteous man who is "an example of a lifelong rejection of God's lordship over his life." Surely there was a submission to God's authority earlier in his life, and he was vexed every day he was in Sodom because he knew he was living in disobedience to his Lord. Also, it is presumptuous to say that his rebellion was lifelong. Is it not more reasonable to believe that God's discipline was effective in restoring him to fellowship and obedience?

It has been too long overlooked that a number of the verses in the

New Testament regarding salvation emphasize the necessity of a person's submission to Christ as Lord. Romans 10:9 and 13 tell us plainly that: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as *Lord* (as the Greek text puts it), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 6:23 informs us that the "wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ *our Lord*." Acts 2:21 reads: ". . . Whosoever shall call on the name of *the Lord* shall be saved." Does not Peter here mean to emphasize the lordship of Christ?

If some salvation verses do not mention Christ's lordship, it is because saving faith properly understood always involves trusting Christ with one's life. It means the believer transfers confidence in himself to confidence in Christ to both save him and manage his life. Superficial faith never saved anyone. Christ is more than a means of escaping hell. He is the "great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20). Is not the shepherd the "lord" of the sheep? Christ is also the "head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). Does not the head control the body? And Christ is, like Melchisedec, both a priest and a king to whom each Christian owes the utmost loyalty and obedience.

To say that the above are mere titles that do not involve the believer in a relationship of submission to the Lord's authority hardly makes sense. And to admit that believers sometimes rebel against the Lord does not contradict the believer's initial surrender to Christ. Whatever the spiritual state of the believer, Jesus Christ is his Lord. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8). And we wouldn't have it any other way! ■

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is president
of Western
Baptist
College
in Salem,
Oregon.



Paul N. Tassell

BIBLICAL SALVATION

Paul penned the classic definition of Biblical salvation in Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle John concurs with Paul: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

The key words are "faith" and "believe." In the GARBC Articles of Faith, Article VIII on salvation declares our agreement with Paul and John: "We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation."

We reject any teaching that ultimately leads to salvation by works. Religious systems such as Roman Catholicism and the well-known cults like Mormonism are repudiated by Regular Baptists because such systems deny the clear teaching of the Bible; namely, salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-10). We must call into serious question any preacher or teacher who departs from such basic, foundational Scriptural truth.

In 1879, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached on Romans 5:1. His sermon was entitled "Peace: A Fact and a Feeling." He said:

None of us will ever experience true peace with God except through Jesus Christ. I like that strong expression of Luther, bold and bare as it is, when, in commenting on the epistle to the Galatians, he says, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." If you have anything to do with God absolutely, you will be destroyed. There cannot be any point of contact between absolute deity and fallen humanity except

through Jesus Christ, the appointed Mediator. That is God's door; all else is a wall of fire. You can by Christ approach the Lord, but this is the sole bridge across the gulf. Whenever you, dear soul, begin to deal with God according to your own experience, according to your own frames and feelings, or even according to the exercises of your own faith, unless that faith keeps its eye on Christ, you will lose your peace.



Spurgeon was right! We are saved solely by personal faith in the crucified, buried, risen, ascended Christ. We must not confuse the instantaneous act of salvation with the long process of progressive sanctification. We must not confuse our deliverance from sin with discipleship. We must not make saviorship and lordship synonymous. We are declared, as far as our *standing* is concerned, righteous at the moment of personal faith in Christ. We may not be very righteous as far as our *state* of actual being is concerned, but we are, thank God, *saved*.

Charles Hodge correctly concluded: "It is not through ourselves in any way, neither by our own merit, nor our own efforts. It is all of grace. It is all through Jesus Christ. And this the justified soul is ever anxious to acknowledge" (p. 132, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* published by Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1955).

The mixing of law and grace, works and faith, has ever been the bane of true salvation doctrine. Dispensational distinctives are ignored at our own peril. Salvation has always been by faith. Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, David and all other saved people were saved by grace through faith. That is why Paul wrote: "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:2, 3).

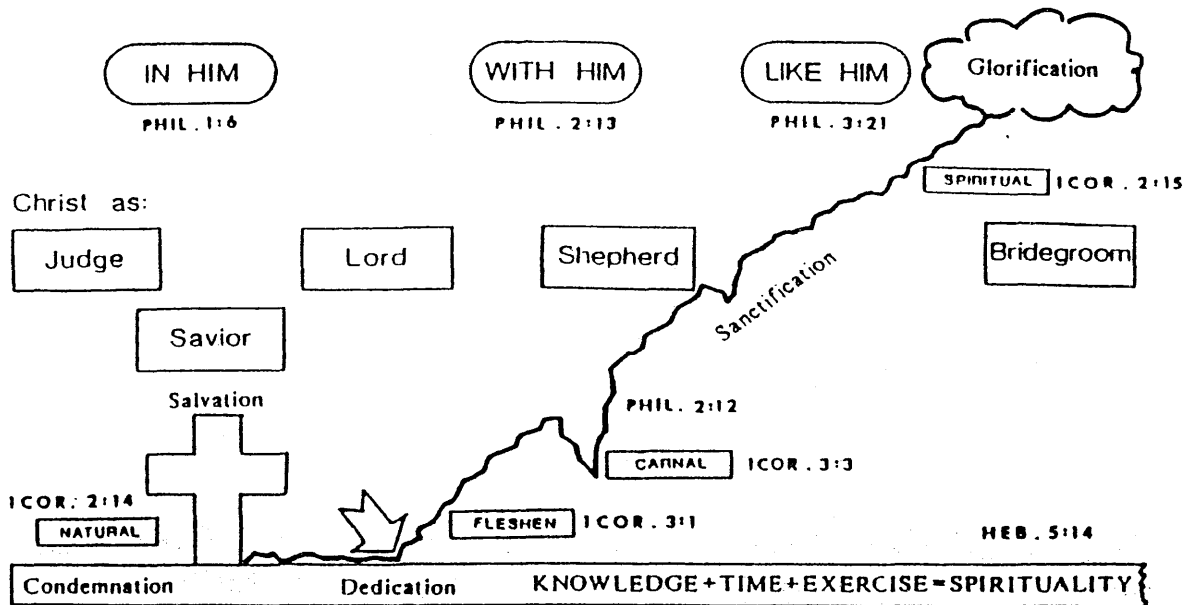
NO PAIN, NO GAIN

Recently I read of an Ohio girl who almost never cried. She never wept when she fell down. She never cried when she bumped her head or skinned her knee. She did not even let out a yelp when she burned her hand on a hot stove. She cried only when she was angry or hungry.

Medical personnel quickly discovered she had a defect in the central nervous system for which no cure is known. She simply could not feel pain. The doctor told her mother she must watch her daughter constantly. The girl might break a bone and continue using it until it could not be set properly. She might develop appendicitis without the usual

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THE SPIRITUAL MAN



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MUST CHRIST BE LORD TO BE SAVIOUR?

	Salvation	Discipleship
1. Cost	Nothing	Everything
2. Center:	Jesus as Savior	Jesus as Master
3. Commencement:	Salvation	Dedication
4. Conception:	Born	Made
5. Concept:	Deliverance from	Following after
6. Content:	Deliverance	Duty
7. Course:	Believe	Do
8. Consequence:	Forgiveness	Fruit
9. Confirmation:	Life	Love
10. Commandment:	Invitation	Imperative
11. Company:	Unbelievers	Believers

MK