

Lordship Salvation?

Scarce honest discussions are found regarding "Lordship Salvation." Even rarer are sincere discussions not erecting "strawman" arguments regarding the opposing view, upon which they easily blow them away. One hopes this misunderstanding or mischaracterization is unintentional due to passion or the taking Biblical or extrabiblical commentary out of context. As a result, most struggle with a definition. "Lordship Salvation is a phrase that is normally understood to mean that you must make Christ, both Savior and Lord, in order to be eternally saved. This often means faith and obedience, or faith and a commitment to completely serve Him as two requirements to be eternally saved." (Nyberg. **Top 10 Bible Doctrines**, 2013, p. 113).

Receiving Jesus as Savior, then subsequently submitting to Him as Lord of your life, seem to be two separate decisions. Yes, these two decisions can occur so closely together that they appear simultaneous, which can add to the confusion on this issue. However, Scripture indicates some Christians choose to remain baby Christians far longer than they should (cf. **Heb. 5:11-14**), clearly indicating they have not made Christ Lord of their life. Those Christians have not learned and discerned to trust God for their daily abundant life, as they did for their eternal life.

Additional confusion results from every false religion or cult group trying to add man's "works" to eternal salvation, even if they also claim to believe in Christ's finished work. God says it is one paradigm or the other (grace vs works, not both). "**And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise, work is no more work**" (**Rom. 11:6**).

"Lordship Salvation" is often contrasted with a position called "Free Grace" or some prefer the term, "Easy Believism" to be eternally saved. Is eternal salvation "free?" Yes! Is eternal salvation by "grace?" Yes! Is eternal salvation "easy to believe?" Yes! Was eternal salvation bought and paid for by the substitutionary finished work of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection? Yes! So, it was not easy for Christ, but it is easy to receive "**by grace through faith**" in what Christ finished and accomplished on the cross. Both positions pretty much agree on this, unless clearly not eternally saved.

A frequent strawman against "Free Grace" does not understand that "Free Grace" is focused on eternal salvation, and is not to be associated with the "Hyper-Grace Movement" (HGM). HGM misunderstands the critical need for repentance and good works after eternal salvation as part of the sanctification process. Of course, God wants us to live a victorious abundant life over sin and not be continually defeated by sin and its deadly consequences. We'll

discuss repentance a little later. To better understand HGM, see a critique of [The Hyper-Grace Movement](#).

Another frequent strawman against "Free Grace" is that Jesus focused most of His 3-year earthly ministry on the importance of discipleship, following Him. Yes, He did. This was not to be eternally saved. It was to call Apostles upon which He was to build the foundation of His Church, "**Himself being the Chief Cornerstone**" (**Eph. 2:20**). Yes, He spent most of His ministry calling and discipling His Apostles, and offering Himself as Messiah to an unrepentant and rejecting Israel (at His 1st Coming), but will receive Him at His 2nd Coming.

There are many brilliant and I believe eternally saved folks who hold "Lordship Salvation" (e.g., John MacArthur, J. I. Packer) or "Free Grace" (e.g., Zane Hodges, Louis Sperry Chafer, Norman Geisler). Then why is this so critically important? Adding anything to, obfuscating the gospel, or changing "**the grace of Christ unto another gospel,**" "**would pervert the gospel of Christ,**" and God says, "**let him be accursed**" (Greek: "anathema"-excommunicated, banned, accursed, cursed; twice in **Gal. 1:6-10**). None should ever want to proclaim a false-gospel, make it confusing, or cause someone to miss being eternally saved.

Truly, each person gets eternally saved in child-like faith (**Mat. 18:3-6**) in Jesus. Christ promises truly, truly that "**He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life**" (**John 6:47**). Is that true, or is there something else that needs to be added to His promise for it to be fulfilled? Is eternal salvation a "**free gift**" to those who believe unto eternal "**justification**" or is there an additional requirement (**Rom. 5:15-18**)? There is nothing added to "**believe**" in Christ to "**receive**" eternal life (**John 1:12; 3:16**...). Pause and consider.

Many try to add to belief to be eternally saved. Often you hear statements like "*you have to also be willing to clean up your life first.*" You must be completely sincere. You must repent of all sin in your life, or at least of all known sins first. You must "*say the sinner's prayer.*" You must be willing to give up all bad habits, addictions, or sins in your life. You must "*promise to follow Christ*" every moment of every day. You must be water baptized. You must be obedient. You must personally commit to...

Chuck Swindoll says about **John 3:15**, "*...so that whoever believes.' Look at it! Whoever believes will have eternal life. Not believes and hopes to give up his sins. Not believes and desires to be sincere. Not believes and proves that he is honest and just in his motives. Not believes because he has cleaned up his life and finally deserves to believe. He looks...In **John 3** the message is Don't make it difficult. Don't make it difficult. It's a gift. Some of you are still outside of Christ because you have made it difficult...Stop doing that! Take it! Take it!...This is the way you get in...Look! You'll live!*" (Swindoll, Charles R.

Insight for Living, Audio (9:30-10:56), Part 3: "Same Song, Eleventh Verse...Hope Beyond Snakebite," January 4-8, 2019).

It is important to understand the meaning of true belief or true faith. However, trust is not rocket-science. Even a child can receive God's free gift by only personally trusting Christ to pay for all their sin. Nowhere does God's Word say one must repent of any specific sin or even recall all known individual sins to first repent of each sin to receive eternal life. No one is even aware of all their sin and unrighteousness prior to being eternally saved. You are repenting of sin (plural-all your own efforts), which separates you from a holy God. True faith is one believing their sin requires death and separates them from God, and Jesus' death is substituted on their behalf so they can be completely forgiven to receive His righteousness and life. Eternal salvation is simply received in child-like faith (even as little as a mustard seed; cf. **Luk. 17:6**).

True belief includes repentance. Faith and repentance are not synonymous. You cannot believe something different without changing your mind. Unbelievers must experience guilt of sin and reverse their decision from trusting in their own "works" to embrace Christ's perfect finished work to be eternally saved. The Greek word for repentance is "*metanoia*"—guilt, reversal of decision, repentance. So, **repentance is inseparable from true faith (not an additional condition to be eternally saved)**. The Spirit has not even revealed all your sin and ways in which you have fallen short of God's glory yet (cf. **Rom. 3:23**). That is part of the sanctification process. But of course, after a person has been eternally saved, they will experience "**abundant life**," filling of the Spirit, victory over sin...and be convicted by the Spirit to repeatedly repent every time they sin (not to be eternally saved, but because they have been, and have been given a desire to experience daily cleansing "**from all unrighteousness**," **John 10:10; 16:8; Eph. 5:18; 1Jo. 1:9; 5:4**). (For more detail on Repentance, see [blog](#) and first 3 comments).

Does God desire all believers to make the secondary decision to make Christ Lord of their life and become a passionate follower of Jesus Christ? Yes! No one can say, "**Jesus is Lord**" except by the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 12:3**); and a person does not get the Holy Spirit until eternally saved (**Eph. 1:13-14**). Does He want us to be a disciple and do "*good works*?" Yes! Does He want us to get water baptized? Yes! Does He want us to become Church members? Yes! Does He want us to take part in Communion or the Lord's Supper? Yes! Does He want us to study our Bible, pray, give, share our faith, use our gifts in love to Him and others? Yes! In fact, He commands all of these to believers, His Church, His body. When we get eternally saved, we are "**born again**," "**adopted**," "**a new creation**," get the indwelling power of "**the Spirit of truth**," have "**eternal life**," that is "**reserved in heaven**," are "**kept by the power of God**," "**they shall never perish**," and believers will evidence their

faith by their works (**1Co. 5:17; John 3:3-6; 10:28; 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9-11; James 2:18; 1Pe. 1:3-5**). I included several eternal security happenings that occur and are never undone in the life of every believer showing the security of all believers. This is so important as many "Lordship Salvation" proponents use another faulty strawman that claim "Free Grace" or a non-Lordship position holds a person is saved by faith alone, yet their faith does not persevere, a Christian can completely cease believing, or a Christian is not eternally secure. A person eternally saved by grace through faith alone is more eternally secure than one attempting to be saved by faith and Lordship.

Therefore, trusting Christ to eternally save you is the beginning. The second decision is submitting to His Lordship each day. So, making Christ Lord of your life, submitting to His Lordship, being His disciple, dedicating your life to follow Him, "**walking in the Spirit**," etc. will progressively occur in the life of a true believer and be culminated when ultimately glorified in heaven. This is a great thing. This is a progressive thing. No one when they get saved are even aware of the many ways in which they sin and "**fall short of the glory of God**." The Spirit progressively, continuously, and daily leads each child of God, conforming them, chastening them, so that they grow closer to God.

So, clearly "**Lordship salvation**" is not a requirement to be eternally saved, but a result of being eternally saved. There is nothing in addition to "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved**" (**Acts 16:31**). These are two separate decisions, although Lordship can be made just after eternal salvation. In fact, a person cannot make someone Lord prior to believing in them, and then can gain the desire and ability to do so.

Four questions are helpful to explore with those unclear or struggling in regards to "*Lordship salvation*."

1) Is there anything else you would like to add to salvation (besides receiving Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection by faith to pay for your sins and give you eternal life)? Most already say, "*Lordship Salvation*." I like to say that I think I know you well enough to say you would not add "*Water Baptism, Church Membership, Communion, etc.*" to be eternally saved? Why then do you want to add Lordship to be eternally saved? The Deity of Christ is a fundamental of the faith. Christ had to be Lord (He is God) for Him to be able to live a perfect life, pay for all sin, and to save us. A similar question gets at their definitions or addition. How would you describe to a child, "*making Jesus Lord of your life to be eternally saved, and what Scripture would you use?*" You will find there are no Scriptures, and every verse they attempt to reference is about discipleship or following Christ, which can only happen once you know Him and have a relationship with Him.

2) Do you believe your pastor or that I have made Christ Lord of my life? There have been many days where He has not been in both our lives. In fact, He is not Lord of our life every time we sin. He is a lot more Lord of my life today than He was when I got saved, demonstrating my faith is real.

3) When Jesus is NOT Lord of your life, do you believe you are now not eternally saved? This helps all who clearly believe in "eternal security" or "perseverance of the saints." God knows whether we have put our faith in Him instantly. We are not saved, nor kept "by works," but "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (**Titus 3:5; 1Pe. 1:5**). Often, people do not know whether our professed faith is real or just mere words, until they see us following and being conformed to Christ (making Him Lord, submitting to His Lordship, maturing in Him). For those who have not made Christ Lord of your lives, you should "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (**2Co. 13:5**). As every true believer will live more righteously once saved (cf. **1Jo. 3:10**). You cannot before salvation, but once saved, you can because of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (**Col. 1:27**).

4) The Apostle Paul said in **Romans 12:1-2**, "I beg you brothers..." {and I'm paraphrasing} to make Christ Lord of your life, "which is your reasonable service." He would not beg brothers to make Christ Lord of their life if this was something an unsaved person had to do (had already done) to get eternally saved. And yes, every believer is commanded to, is begged to, is Spirit compelled to, and should make Christ Lord of their life. I truly believe that **no one fully has or makes Christ completely Lord of their life until in Heaven and ultimately glorified!**

"Actual service to Him can't take place until eternal salvation, because all our good deeds are as "filthy rags" prior to eternal salvation (**Isa. 64:6**)" (Nyberg, **Top 10 Bible Doctrines**, 2013, p.113). An unsaved person does NOT have the ability or desire to make Christ Lord of their life until after they become a new creature, are indwelt, and filled with the Spirit of Christ, Who gives them the heart and ability to submit to the Lordship of Christ.

"You wouldn't require a person that is drowning from a boating accident to state that they are willing to practice safe boating habits for the rest of their life before you would throw them a life preserver! Neither would God require such a confession. That is absurd to see God's eternal salvation and gracious gift in such a light. He offers eternal salvation to all that will trust His saving arm! Being saved from an unsafe boating accident would probably result in a person practicing safe boating procedures, but certainly is not a requirement to be saved or rescued" (Nyberg, **Top 10 Bible Doctrines**, 2013, pp. 114-115).

Anyway, it is my desire that we all make clear the glorious gospel to ourself and others. It is simple. "**He that believeth on Me, hath everlasting life**" (**John 6:47**). Nothing added to trusting Christ's finished work alone. We rest in Christ's finished work. We give Him all the praise for eternal salvation, and His continued work that leads us to a more daily desire and choice to submit to His Lordship. Let's be bondservants of Jesus Christ. He's the best. We can trust Jesus for eternal salvation. We can also trust Him for daily saving / sanctification, and abundant life.

More in depth study can be found looking at some great books on the subject.

1. Hodges, Zane C. **The Gospel Under Siege**, 1981. Discusses that the Gospel is free, with a position called "*Free Grace*."
2. MacArthur Jr, John. **The Gospel According to Jesus**, 1988 (again by Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994). Rebuts Hodges and espouses a "*Lordship Salvation*" position.
3. Hodges, Zane C. **And Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation**, 1989. Replies to Dr. MacArthur again about eternal salvation being absolutely free to all who will believe.
4. MacArthur Jr, John. **The Gospel According to the Apostles** (Dallas: Word Publishing, 2000). Discusses the Lordship/discipleship position.

Some other quick free articles on the web.

1. <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/DD07/lordship-salvation>. A well written introduction to Lordship Salvation. It provides the Grace Community Church (John MacArthur's) position on "*Lordship Salvation*." It provides 9 distinctives of Lordship. However, many folks that do not believe in "*Lordship Salvation*" also hold most of these "*distinctives*" with slight variation in definitions (e.g. see my repentance discussion, eternal salvation vs sanctification, personal decision vs personal commitment, Deity vs Lordship, requirements vs results of eternal salvation).
2. <https://www.ligonier.org/guides/lordship-salvation>. A 4-minute read attempting to summarize "*Free Grace*" vs "*Lordship Salvation*." Contains some good quotes, but misunderstands the "*Free Grace*" position.
3. <https://cryingoutforjustice.blog/2017/11/27/lordship-salvation-vv-easy-believism-vv-reformed-theology/>. Includes numerous quotes and comments espousing that both "*Easy Believism*" and "*Lordship Salvation*" are flawed and lead to abuse. It also includes Reformed Theology contrasts and comparisons.