

“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.”

**Dr. Harry Ironside
“Another Gospel” tract**

My summary of this paper:

You do not believe by looking at works; you believe by looking at Christ.

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.”

Lordship Salvation

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

When Mount Saint Helen's erupted and spewed its ash and lava all over the place, many scientists were concerned about the long-range effects that it might have on our planet and atmosphere in particular. We might view the present subject that we are going to study as an erupting volcano which is emitting the smoke, fumes and lava of man-made heat all over the church today. One should be concerned how it will really affect the church in the long run. Like a volcano, the subject of Lordship Salvation never really becomes extinct. It is always lying dormant and ready to erupt once again.

Many view this subject as a controversy. As always, the controversy is not with God or God's Word. The controversy is with man and his understanding of God's Word. Let us beware of making something a controversy that God does not. The title for this paper is merely designed to catch the reader's attention and interest. I do not really believe there is any controversy with God or God's Word on this issue. All the controversy is with man. Man makes an issue out of something that is not an issue with God.

In these messages I want to dive into this issue with my sleeves rolled back. No, I am not ready to fight you. Rather, I want to lovingly clarify where the problems of misunderstanding are and try to make some good Biblical sense about this volcanic issue.

Introduction

Wading Through the Reformed Teachings and the Present Day Issue:

(Please put on your hip boots. It will get rather deep at some points along the way!)

The roots of Lordship Salvation primarily developed or grew out of the post-Reformation (the Reformed churches following the Reformation) and post-Calvinistic thought. Its basic ideas can be traced back to these days, specifically those days following the Reformation. Lordship Salvation can be readily seen in the English-speaking Puritan Theology of the past.

The Puritans in one sense wanted to be known as the Reformers of the Reformers' writings. The Reformation did not take the Church of England where they thought it should be. Because of this, there was a vigorous revival in theological teaching and preaching so that the church could take strides forward in learning and understanding Biblical truth. I have many books by the old Puritan writers and can observe the trend that they followed. The Puritans wanted to purify the Church of England; hence, the term puritans was attached to them. ***In reality, this view of Lordship Salvation is the result of the Reformed Theology that grew out of Puritan teaching within the***

English Reformation of the sixteenth century. Of course, Puritanism spread to America through the colonies. Puritan theologians, writers and laymen throughout the 16th and earlier 17th centuries spread this concept of salvation. The whole concept of Lordship Salvation was developed by the English Puritans and passed down to America. It was not the primary teaching of any prominent Reformers such as Calvin and Luther. However, Puritan Reformers dating back to William Tyndale, John Knox, to William Ames, William Perkins, John Preston, the theologian John Owen, Thomas Manton, Thomas Watson, Thomas Brooks, Richard Baxter, John Cotton, William Bradford, Matthew Poole, Oliver Cromwell, John Winthrop, David Clarkson, William Bates, John Gibbon, John Milton and John Bunyan were all well-known Puritans. Of course, the Puritan writers did magnify the grace of God. Who can forget the classic novel of John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*? However, in most Puritan writers there seems to be a general shift away from the assurance of salvation through faith in the free offer of the grace of God. There was an increasing emphasis placed upon the issue of works with faith as the sole determining factor of salvation. A strange mixing of faith with works began to take shape through these Puritan years. Grace was no longer offered as free grace as it was in the earlier Reformation period. The need for surrender and commitment was tied in with grace. And faith was reworked as including works. The subtle shift had occurred in the Puritan era.

Even the beloved Matthew Henry wrote this in the beginning of the 1700's:

"We are too apt to rest in a bare profession of faith, and think that this will save us; it is cheap and easy religion."

John Gill was the Baptist British minister who wrote in 1767:

"...sanctification is to be seen in conversion, which is a turning of men from their iniquities: and that holiness which is begun in regeneration..."

The later Bishop J.C. Ryle wrote these words over a century ago:

"I doubt, indeed, whether we have any warrant for saying that a man can possibly be converted without being consecrated to God."

It is interesting to study the writings of Calvin and Luther. These two Reformation figures and others did not hold to the teaching of Lordship Salvation as the Puritans of England developed following the Reformation. The original Reformers like Calvin and Luther did stress the teaching of the perseverance of the saints. However, they did not teach the concept of Lordship Salvation, which is being taught today. *Their teaching was that the faith, which actually brings a person to salvation, was simply one thing – faith.* Faith itself did not include the idea of discipleship or submission. Both Calvin and Luther taught that assurance could be based upon a person's faith that they place in Christ. It was their elective faith in Christ that assured them of eternal salvation and not the submission or surrender of a person.

John Calvin, the Swiss Reformer (1509–1564), wrote:

“For, as regards justification, faith is something merely passive, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God’s favor but *receiving* from Christ what we lack ... We compare faith to a kind of vessel; for unless we come empty and with the mouth of our soul open to seek Christ’s grace, we are not capable of receiving Christ.”

Calvin also wrote this clear statement about faith:

“It is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour toward us, founded on the truth of a **free promise** in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit.”

Notice that Calvin bases faith upon a free promise. This is nothing more than the promise of the written word of God. Calvin’s view of faith did not include the mixture with works, obedience and discipleship. It was a faith rooted in the free promise of God’s Word concerning eternal life. This was truly faith alone in Christ alone. To Calvin, faith is not obedience or commitment. Obedience, in Calvin’s view, flows from faith and is part of the nature of the Christian life.

Calvin wrote in his Institutes:

“Doubtless, if we are to determine by our works in what way the Lord stands affected towards us, I admit that we cannot even get the length of a feeble conjecture: but since faith should accord with the free and simple promise, there is no room left for ambiguity. With what kind of confidence, pray, shall we be armed if we reason in this way – God is propitious to us, provided we deserve it by the purity of our lives.”

Calvin admitted that it was wrong to trust in works for our justification. Therefore, we should not trust in them for the assurance of our salvation. In his commentary on First Corinthians he said, “When the Christian looks at himself he can only have ground for anxiety, indeed despair.”

Calvin taught that the perseverance of the saints was intended to be a secondary confirmation of a person’s salvation and not the sole ground of assurance for a person’s salvation. He taught that it would bring a secondary encouragement to the believer’s heart, which already had assurance in Christ alone through faith. He taught that we could only derive our assurance from our contemplation of Christ and His work done on our behalf.

Again Calvin writes in his Institutes:

“Should they begin to estimate it (assurance of their salvation) by their good works, nothing will be weaker or more uncertain; works, when estimated by themselves, no less proving the divine displeasure by their imperfection, than His good-will by their incipient purity.”

“Faith totters if it pays attention to works, since no one, even he most holy, will find there anything on which to rely.”

In his commentary on Ephesians Calvin wrote:

“But if we have been chosen in Him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the father, if we conceive Him as severed from His Son. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election.”

Luther also spoke about faith alone in Christ alone as the grounds of our salvation and assurance of salvation. He speaks about his conversion experience and writes: “I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that “the just shall live by his faith.” Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the “justice of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.”

Martin Luther also wrote:

“The sort of faith that does not look at its own works nor at its own strength and worthiness, noting what sort of quality or new created or infused virtue it may be. *f* But faith goes out of itself, clings to Christ, and embraces Him as its own possession; and *faith is certain that it is loved by God for His sake.*”

So where does this certainty come from? According to Luther it comes from relying on the promise of God’s mercy in the Gospel, and not from any sense of internal change.

Luther goes on to say:

“For certainty does not come to me from any kind of reflection on myself and on my state. On the contrary it comes solely through hearing the Word, solely because and in so far as I cling to the Word of God and its promise.”

Faith is only acceptance of the Word, effective for salvation, and is for Luther, the decisive source of certainty. Whatever disagreements there may have been between Calvin and the Lutheran theologians of the Reformation, those disagreements did not include the nature of saving faith. Thus, Calvin and Luther – the first key Reformers, taught unconditional security. Today we find teachers claiming to follow the Reformed tradition who are actually teaching a conditional security that is based upon self-examination of a person’s life and holiness in order to determine his salvation. Instead of looking at his faith in Christ as Calvin and Luther taught, today he is told to look at his works in order to determine his salvation. ***This was the primary emphasis of the Post-Reformation Puritans.*** Make no doubt about it.

Writing in *Bib Sac* in 1990, Thomas G. Lewellen said: “In the Puritan era, however, there was a shift in the definition of saving faith. In the generations following the Reformation, some theologians subtly changed the Reformers’ definition of faith from a passive receptivity to an active response on the part of the sinner, centered in the will and containing both commitment and obedience. This change is most evident in the writings of the English Calvinists and is embodied in the Westminster Standards. This explains in part why lordship salvation teachers rely most heavily on Westminster theology and the writings of the English Calvinists to validate their position.”

Lewellen sights other worthy sources, such as Gordon Clark and R. T. Kendall, who is an expert on Calvinism. Their findings clearly verify this same drift away from the concept of faith that the Reformers taught. In the post-Reformation period men began to embrace faith as including obedience and commitment. Lewellen goes on to say:

“What is true, however, is that MacArthur’s view *is* embodied in the Westminster Standards and *does* have a long and powerful history in the Christian church. The idea that faith is an active commitment, including obedience, is the view of one strand of church history—English Puritanism—which is of course a powerful strand. One should not confuse that strand, however, with the “true church.” Calvin disagreed with it; Lutheran theology has always opposed it; *even today some Reformed theologians do not accept it.*”

Even John MacArthur himself admits this:

“While Luther, Calvin, and the Puritans might have differed somewhat on how to describe faith and how to obtain assurance, they all agreed that sanctification inevitably follows justification.”

He also says: “Later Reformed theologians, recognizing that genuine Christians often lack assurance, denied that *any* assurance is implicit in believing. On this issue they were in disagreement with Calvin. Calvin, arguing against Rome, was eager to emphasize the possibility of immediate assurance. The later Reformers, battling antinomian tendencies in their movement, wanted to emphasize the importance of practical evidences in the lives of believers.”

Again he writes: “So on the one hand, Calvin tended to make the grounds for assurance wholly *objective*, urging believers to look to the promises of Scripture to gain a sense of personal assurance. On the other hand the Puritans tended to emphasize *subjective* means of establishing assurance, counseling people to examine their lives and behavior for evidences of their election.”

Zane Hodges also stresses how the later Reformers expanded the early Reformers’ definition of faith. He calls Puritan teaching on faith and assurance “... a tragic blemish

on the history of the Christian church. Puritan teaching is the basis of lordship salvation. In the English-speaking world, this radically altered concept of saving faith can with considerable fairness be described as Puritan theology. Lordship salvation, in its best known contemporary form, simply popularizes the Puritanism to which it is heir.”

This is absolutely true and a frank admission that post-Reformation theology was responsible for Lordship teaching. ***The difference between Calvin and the Puritans raises a question that goes to the heart of the lordship debate: Should Christians seek assurance through clinging only to the objective promises of Scripture, or through subjective self-examination?*** The later Reformers developed this concept of Lordship Salvation where a person must add works or obedience to their faith in order to know that their faith was genuine. This led to a new Gospel message that included works and obedience. It led to the place where obedience was linked to saving faith in some measure in order to assure real salvation and assurance.

Lane stresses: “For Calvin, it was not possible to partake of salvation without being sure of it. Assurance is not a second stage in the Christian life, subsequent to and distinct from faith. In the following century some of his followers did separate them in this way and this, together with a departure from Calvin’s ground of assurance, led to a widespread loss of assurance.”

However, the later Puritan writers began a preoccupation with the uncertainty of salvation. The uncertainty of salvation was a major discussion and peculiarity to the Puritan era. It was most certainly not a fruit of the Reformation. Both Calvin and Luther taught that assurance of salvation is of the very essence of faith in Christ without looking at works. A central tenet of Reformation teaching was that the personal certainty of one’s eternal destiny is tied up with what it means to believe the Gospel.

So MacArthur does not agree with them (Calvin and Luther) and MacArthur ***and all Lordship teaching says that sanctification is interwoven with faith to the point that one must offer the Gospel with the idea of surrender and commitment attached to the Gospel.*** I say with assurance, this is not what Luther or Calvin taught and Lordship Salvation teachers know it. ***Yet, they have adopted this idea in their Reformed Theology today and claim to be following the tradition of Reformation Theology which says that faith alone saves but when presenting the Gospel you must also stress the life of surrender, sacrifice, submission and obedience so that when a person does have faith in Christ it will be the real kind of faith.*** I beg to differ with them! You do not talk about obedience or surrender to a poor lost sinner! You share Christ to the poor lost soul. You don’t offer the sinner a system of do’s and don’ts when giving the Gospel to them.

Those who claim to be following Reformation Theology and call themselves “Reformed” had better reread the Reformers view on the Gospel presentation and how works are separated from faith. The Reformers taught that faith is separate from works but works would ultimately flow out of a regenerated life. ***Later followers who embraced Reformation teaching began to misconstrue and rework this teaching to mean that in order for a person to be saved a person must actually include works with their faith and examine their works to prove that their faith was real instead of merely examining Christ.*** Modern Lordship writers who claim to follow the doctrines of the first Reformers on election, grace, justification, regeneration and faith are not following Reformation teaching when they stress obedience as part of the Gospel presentation. Obedience is what follows faith and is separate from faith. The Reformers always taught this to be true. *Furthermore, it’s one thing to say that personal sanctification “follows” justification but it’s altogether different to say that is part of justification as MacArthur reasons.*

Calvin and Luther did not teach that one must look at their works alongside of their faith in order to gain the assurance of their salvation. And if Lordship teachers want to follow the true Reformed tradition they will have to admit this. *The original Reformers did stress the perseverance of the saints in good works but at least separated this perseverance or sanctification from the matter of saving faith and assurance.*

Modern Reformed writers of today who stress that they are following Reformation Theology will be quick to tell you that both Calvin and Luther did see the necessity of justification and practical sanctification as working together. This is absolutely correct. But they saw the two bound together only in the sense that sanctification (practical holiness) will follow justification. This is altogether different than saying that sanctification (submission, surrender, holiness) is bound to the doctrine of justification through an unknown number of works to validate justification and that works are a necessary part of saving faith in Christ.

Luther said: “True faith, of which we speak, cannot be manufactured by our own thoughts, for it is solely a work of God in us, without any assistance on our part. As Paul says to the Romans, it is God’s gift and grace, obtained by one man, Christ. *Therefore, faith is something very powerful, active, restless, effective, which at once renews a person and again regenerates him, and leads him altogether into a new manner and character of life, so that it is impossible not to do good without ceasing.*”

The Formula of Concord, the definitive Lutheran statement of faith, written in 1576, dealt extensively with the relationship between justification and the believer’s obedience. This document reveals that the questions at the heart of the contemporary lordship controversy were also on the minds of the Reformers. The Formula of Concord, like every other significant Protestant creed, refused to divorce justification from sanctification, though it underscored the distinction between the two.

According to this creed, “the renewing of man ... is rightly distinguished from the justification of faith.” The Formula stated explicitly that “antecedent contrition [repentance] and subsequent new obedience **do not appertain to the article of justification before God.**”

But it immediately added, “Yet we are not to imagine any such justifying faith as can exist and abide with a purpose of evil.... But after that man is justified by faith, then that true and living faith works by love [Gal. 5:6], and *good works always follow justifying faith, and are most certainly found together with it.*”

Calvin also said:

“We acknowledge that faith and works are necessarily connected.”

Calvin debated a Catholic cardinal on this very issue and said:

“If you would duly understand how inseparable faith and works are, look to Christ.... Where zeal for integrity and holiness is not vigor, there neither is the Spirit of Christ nor Christ Himself; and wherever Christ is not, there is no righteousness, nay, there is no faith; for faith cannot apprehend Christ for righteousness without the Spirit of sanctification.”

Inserts from Calvin’s institutes also verify his belief in the connection between faith and sanctification: “Since faith embraces Christ as he is offered by the Father, and he is offered not only for justification, for forgiveness of sins and peace, but also for sanctification, as the fountain of living waters, *it is certain that no man will ever know him aright without at the same time receiving the sanctification of the Spirit;* or, to express the matter more plainly, faith consists in the knowledge of Christ; Christ cannot be known without the sanctification of his Spirit: therefore faith cannot possibly be disjoined from pious affection.”

“...Although, in discoursing of faith, we admit that it has a variety of forms; yet, when our object is to show what knowledge of God the wicked possess, *we hold and maintain, in accordance with Scripture, that the pious only have faith.*”

Calvin also said:

“We must take great care not to separate (faith & holiness) what the Lord perpetually conjoins. What then? Let men be taught that it is impossible they can be regarded as righteous by the merit of Christ without being renewed by His spirit unto a holy life.”

The original Reformers taught the doctrine of faith alone in Christ alone. But they also rightly argued for proof of regeneration in a person’s life for which the Scripture clearly speaks about. *Nevertheless, these statements and others by Luther and Calvin concerning justification and sanctification (change of life) have been joined together in*

modern Reformed theology to mean that works (submission and surrender) must actually become wedded together with saving faith in order to be genuine faith in Christ for salvation. And today one must examine their lives in order to see if they are saved and have the assurance of their salvation. Luther or Calvin did not teach this. And this is not a moot point. They separated works from saving faith. They believed in faith alone through Christ alone and they taught that works are the evidence (not part) of faith. There is a difference!

It is one thing to say that works are separate from faith and therefore inevitably follow faith in some measure. It is quite another thing to say that works are part of the actual saving faith and must be produced in some measure and examined in order to verify salvation and the assurance of salvation.

Mixing works with faith takes a Christian's faith on a rabbit trail because it begins to draw them away from what is to be faith alone in the finished work of Christ. Whenever works enter into the picture with faith, then faith is no longer faith. ***You do not believe or increase your faith by looking at works; you believe and increase your faith by looking at Christ (2 Timothy 1:12).*** Faith is different than works (Romans 4:1-5) and should never be used as an indication of a person's standing or acceptance before God. ***Instead of clinging to the promise of eternal life (1 John 5:10-13) many are clinging to the condition of their own life.***

Therefore, we are not to view holiness or works as being part of faith because faith in the finished work of Christ is the only thing that saves us and gives us eternal acceptance in God's sight. When you mix holiness and works with faith as Lordship Salvation teachers do, then you will inevitably start to base your salvation and assurance on your manner of living and not upon faith alone in the finished work of Christ.

Works are simply used as a secondary road marker along the way, which gives added encouragement to you, that you are God's child. To place faith in your works in any fashion, through looking at them and inspecting them so that you can decide whether or not you have enough to verify your faith before God, will lead to a collapse of your faith alone in Christ. But to look at works as merely a secondary confirmation of your faith in Christ will bring added blessing and encouragement to your life.

When you base your salvation or security upon your own performance, then you cannot accept the teaching of eternal life. Why is that? *It's because eternal life is not based upon human performance.* It is based upon God's grace. Jesus gives eternal life to us because it is solely based upon His grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Both Calvin and Luther taught the perseverance of saints in truth and holiness in order to verify that a person's saving faith is genuine. Of course, this is what Lordship

Salvation teachers are stressing today. Therefore, they claim that they are simply following the Reformed tradition of Calvin and Luther. **But the fly in the ointment of Reformed Theology today is that teachers have come to the place where they must include sanctification or the idea of submission and surrender as a necessary part of sharing the Gospel. They are including obedience as a necessary requirement of saving faith. Thus, they must change the Gospel and the true nature of faith alone in Christ alone by adding the requirements of obedience and surrender to their Gospel message. They demand from the poor lost sinner that he will have to obey and follow all the teachings about discipleship and all the commands of the Bible if they want to have true saving faith in Christ.** This is not a Reformation presentation of the Gospel nor is it the true Gospel!

We might conclude that the teaching of Lordship Salvation has grown out of post-Reformation Theology that has not completely or accurately aligned itself with the traditional Reformed Theology of Calvin and Luther. It was a post-Reformation teaching that took the Reformation teaching on the “perseverance of the saints” (a teaching that said works are separate from faith but follow faith) and distorted this teaching by fusing works together with the actual saving faith of a person. The emphasis changed from the object of one’s faith to the kind of faith that a person possessed.

Reformation teaching and proponents of this teaching today claim to be following Calvin and Luther on this point but have actually reworked a system that stresses one must examine their works as a necessary ingredient of the salvation process and their justification. Their claim is that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. But then they stress that obedience and surrender must be part of the Gospel presentation. This is nothing more than works being added on the altar in the Gospel presentation. My friend, it is one thing to preach repentance (change of mind) to lost people. This entails that they must change their mind and heart concerning their sin and need for Christ. However, it is an altogether different story when you start to saying that they must change their manner of living and obey Christ at the same time they place faith in Christ. As we will study, change and obedience is the fruit of repentance and comes after faith has occurred. **Strangely, Lordship writers mix faith with change or obedience and conclude that when you offer the Gospel to the lost sinner he must possess a faith that immediately decides to work, surrender and obey Christ.** This is the error that I will be refuting in this paper. And this teaching is altogether different than Reformation teaching.

The Reformers did not stress discipleship as part of saving faith or assurance. Even later Reformed theologians (1820-1898) like Robert L. Dabney openly declared that he must reject the views of Calvin and Luther. He remarked about the writings of the original Reformers by saying: “It is very obvious to the attentive reader that these views

of faith and assurance (Calvin's and Luther's) which we have examined ground themselves in faulty definitions of saving faith which we have received from the first Reformers. They, as we saw (in their writings), defined saving faith as a belief that Christ has saved me, making the assurance of hope of its necessary essence. Now, the later Reformers, and those learned, holy and modest teachers of the Reformed churches...have subjected this view to searching examination, and rejected it on scriptural grounds."

He went on to say:

"The source of this error is no doubt that doctrine concerning faith which the first Reformers, as Luther and Calvin, were led to adopt from their opposition to the hateful and tyrannical teachings of Rome. These noble Reformers asserted that the assurance of hope is of the essence of saving faith. Thus says Calvin in his commentary on Romans, "My faith is a divine and spiritual belief that God has pardoned and accepted me."

Dabney also asserts:

"[Calvin] requires everyone to say, in substance, I believe fully that Christ *has saved me*. Amidst all Calvin's verbal variations, this is always his meaning; for he is consistent in his error for as sure as truth is in history, Luther and Calvin did fall into this error, which the Reformed churches, led by the Westminster Confession, have since corrected."

These conclusions by later Calvinists clearly reveal their departure from Calvin and Luther on the doctrines of faith and assurance. Lordship Salvation, which stressed a mixture of faith and works, was unheard of in Calvin's and Luther's preaching which broke down the Catholic walls and began the Reformation.

Concerning John Calvin's view of assurance, Bell states, "Without question, Calvin teaches that assurance of one's salvation is of the very essence of faith. Assurance is not an optional extra for the believer." Lane also stresses: "For Calvin, it was not possible to partake of salvation without being sure of it. Assurance is not a second stage in the Christian life, subsequent to and distinct from faith. In the following century some of his followers did separate them in this way and this, together with a departure from Calvin's ground of assurance, led to a widespread loss of assurance."

It is very clear that later Reformed writers were responsible for the development of the Lordship Salvation teaching. The post-Reformation Puritans had developed this theological teaching by taking Calvin's and Luther's teaching on perseverance to an extreme position. A man was now required to possess a faith that was obedient and full of absolute surrender. He was told to look to himself or his works of holiness for assurance so that he could know that his faith was real. Obedience was stressed more than the object of man's faith, which was to

be Christ. This lead to the subtle trap of a Gospel of works and a message that faith and works are wedded together for salvation. *The lines of demarcation between faith and works were obliterated.* In doing this, post-Reformation teachers actually held a doctrine of saving faith and assurance that was in conflict with what Calvin and Luther taught. Lordship Salvation is not a Reformation phenomenon. It is a post-Reformation teaching that was developed in Puritan theology and was aggressively received in the churches that sprang forth from the Reformation era. **We can conclude that Lordship Salvation flows out of a perverted form of the teaching of the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.** The teaching day adds perseverance to the message of the Gospel. Richard Belcher in his book on “A layman’s guide to the Lordship Controversy” also makes the apparent connection that Lordship Salvation teaching grew out of the Reformed teaching of perseverance, which added perseverance to the actual Gospel presentation.

Philip f. Congdon concluded:

“Classical Calvinism teaching is popularly seen in Lordship Salvation theology, which is an application of ‘P’ (Perseverance of the Saints) to the Gospel.” It is defended by men such as Walter Chantry, James Boice, John MacArthur, Jr., John H Gerstner, R.C. Sproul, and J. I. Packer and numerous other Reformed theologians. MacArthur has become to may the most visible defender of this theology. However, he is only expressing doctrine which was developed in the writings of theologians since the days of the Puritans, and was codified in the Westminster Confession.”

Thomas Lewellen correctly concludes by saying:

“Concerning the relationship between faith and assurance of salvation, it must be concluded that contemporary teachers of lordship salvation do not have the united voice of the past leaders of the Christian movement behind them. By regarding assurance of salvation as not being of the essence of faith, but rather as a fruit of faith, and by placing the grounds of assurance within the believer, rather than outside the believer in the Person and work of Christ, lordship salvation on this point is at complete variance with both Luther and Calvin and a whole wing of the Reformed tradition.”

Lordship Salvation teaching came about when man started incorporating the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints into the actual presentation of the Gospel message. This would mean that persevering in holiness and obedience is to be part of a person’s saving response and faith in Christ. It involves presenting the lost sinner with the legalistic message that they must give up all of their sins, surrender and obey all the commands of God in order to come to faith in Christ and know that their faith in Christ is genuine.

Today John MacArthur has boldly endorsed this Lordship Salvation response, which he claims is from the Reformed tradition passed down through the years. MacArthur has said:

“The signature of saving faith is surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ.”

“Those who deny the lordship of Christ are damned.”

“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.”

We can also see the roots of this teaching as being part of earlier teachers. Calvin's successor, Theodore Beza (1519-1605), took the doctrine of perseverance even farther than Calvin originally did. Calvin argued that faith was not part of works and that man cannot base the assurance of his salvation on perseverance. Calvin argued that faith must be in the death of Christ through faith alone. And yet Calvin left the door open for a works teaching to be taught in accordance with faith. Beza was the one to take Calvin's thoughts even farther. He began to actually teach that works were a necessary part of faith and that works must be examined in order to determine one's faith in Christ. Beza grounded assurance in the evidence of a person's works. Faith was to be grounded in the evidences of the fruit of one's life. This was a different conclusion than what Calvin had taught. *Beza basically taught that the true evidence that Christ died for you could only be maintained when you persevere in holiness. This proves that Christ died for you and that you are one of the elect.*

The Puritan, William Perkins (1558-1602), was another leading Calvinist who argued for practical sanctification or holiness to be mixed together with saving faith and become the ground of assurance that you are one of the elect. We must do certain things, and if we do them, we can reflect upon the fact that we have done them and are one of the elect. By the end of the 16th century Perkin's works were published more than Calvin's.

The teaching that perseverance in holiness or works as the measuring stick and assurance of salvation continued to spread. Various Puritans came to the conclusion that keeping the law, keeping a pure heart, being in love with godliness and feeling assurance were the way that you can know that you are one of the elect. The seeds and creation of this strange mixture of works and faith together grew out of a change in teaching that these Puritans had developed which was actually different than Luther and Calvin. **This shift in emphasis to look at works for assurance eventually led to the mixing of works with saving faith. A strange blend was created which attached works to saving faith to such a degree that faith had lost its object which was to be in Christ alone for salvation. Therefore, a person was to have faith alone in Christ only as he could see that his change of life proved that he had faith alone in Christ.** Out of this emphasis grew the Lordship Salvation teaching of today that says a poor lost sinner must surrender, submit his entire life to God and

become completely obedient in order to possess true saving faith in Christ. In other words, faith and obedience cannot be separated. *Therefore, in order for a person to be saved they must become obedient and prove that their faith alone in Christ alone is true faith by their obedience.* Faith alone in Christ alone is only faith alone in Christ alone when you obey God's laws and commit your life to Him.

Lordship Salvation teachers will say something like this. "Faith alone in Christ saves. But in order to have faith alone in Christ alone you must become obedient to God and surrender your whole life to God and promise to serve God and obey all of His commands all the days of your life. This alone will verify that your faith alone in Christ alone is real faith. You must obey God and do whatever He commands you to do in order to have true faith that saves."

What is Lordship Salvation teaching really saying? They are saying that faith alone in Christ alone saves but you must learn to obey God, live holy, and surrender your whole life to God because this is part of your faith alone in Christ that saves you. They are saying that faith alone in Christ saves but that this faith cannot be divorced from your obedience and works – it is part of your faith alone in Christ alone. Therefore, in offering the Gospel to you I want you to understand that you must become obedient to all that God tells you to do or else you will not have true faith in Christ alone or your faith will not be real faith. In short, they are saying that you must have faith in Christ and faith that your obedience and surrendered life will be good enough to verify that you have faith in Christ alone. This is nothing more than a strange mixture of legalism, as we will see in our study.

I believe that there was a definite shift that took place from the cross of Christ to the works of man. There was a detrimental drift away from faith alone in Christ alone in the days following the Reformation. Post-Reformation teachers among the Puritans called themselves "**experimental predestinarians.**" This means that they viewed salvation as something that must be more than just faith. Faith must be experienced through a holy lifestyle in order to know that one is saved. Therefore, Christ in the life must be experienced. One must perform an experiment and see how their life is changed. He must ask himself these questions, "Have I believed" and "Are their evidences of works in my life?" Salvation is then seen to be an experiment whereby I test my life and see if I have enough works to be one of the elect.

This type of teaching is why much of the Reformed Theology and teachers of today are spilling over into this "Lordship Salvation" teaching which in essence is saying that "**It's only faith alone in Christ alone if you change your life and submit to God and obey Him.**"

The problem arises when you link a working type of faith with the presentation of the Gospel message and stress that obedience or discipleship is part of faith or

what it means to believe on Christ. The error in presenting the Gospel resides in the teaching that says works of obedience and surrender must be included with your faith in Christ. This not only adds to what faith alone in Christ alone means but also includes works in the message of the Gospel.

Where does perseverance fit into this picture? We know that the original Reformers taught perseverance of the saints in the faith and in holiness. They taught that the true child of God would persevere in truth and holiness until the end of his life and never be lost or condemned.

Calvin, writing in his commentary on Matthew 24, says:

“Christ warns believers that they must surmount this obstacle, lest, overcome by bad examples, they apostatize. And therefore he repeats the statement, that no man can be saved, *unless he strive lawfully*, (2 Timothy 2:5,) so as to *persevere to the end.*”

He also said:

“...that God, who has given us grace to begin well, may also continue to give us grace to persevere.

He goes on to say:

“God, who is rich in mercy, from his immutable purpose of election, does not wholly take away his Holy Spirit from his own, even in lamentable falls; nor does he so permit them to glide down that they should fall from the grace of adoption and the state of justification; or commit the “sin unto death,” or against the Holy Spirit; that, being deserted by him, they should cast themselves headlong into eternal destruction. So that not by their own merits or strength, but by the gratuitous mercy of God, they obtain it, that they neither *totally fall* from faith and grace, nor *finally continue* in their falls and perish.”

The Westminster Confession, the product of Puritan thinkers, clearly teaches:

“They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved”

The post-Reformation teachers also taught this to be true. Thus, they were following the teaching of Calvin and Luther on this point. However, I believe that they departed from Luther and Calvin on this point of perseverance when they began to mix perseverance with actual saving faith and tied the two together in order to determine a person’s salvation and possess assurance for that salvation. This has been examined already. **The idea of perseverance in modern Reformed Theology of today is many times incorporating sanctification or perseverance with actual saving faith. This creates a strange mixture that faith alone in Christ alone saves only as this faith becomes obedient and forsakes all known sin and loves God without**

reservation. Ultimately many (not all) Reformed writers will stress this mixture to the point that faith alone in Christ alone can no longer be faith alone in Christ alone unless works are interlocked with saving faith. Of course, Calvinism of today teaches that one must examine themselves to see whether their faith is real. They stress self-examination to such a degree that they incorporate perseverance in holiness as the sole measuring stick for real faith and assurance of salvation. **The person is left to examine their works to see if their faith that they placed in Christ was real or genuine. It leads them to look at their faith plus their works to determine their salvation. This is nothing more than legalism in disguise.**

The ultimate conclusion of interlocking saving faith with perseverance in works is the teaching of Lordship Salvation which says if one is to be saved he must become obedient to all of God's commands and surrender everything in his life to God. Only when you do this can you really know that you have placed faith alone in Christ alone. Therefore, in witnessing to a person the matter of discipleship must enter into the picture. You must completely surrender your whole life to God and stop your alcoholic addiction and drug addiction or else your faith in Christ will not be real.

Imagine telling this message to a drug addict or alcoholic that has been a drunkard all of his life. He has tried everything to free himself from alcohol and nothing has worked. Now you tell him in your Gospel witness that he must give up his alcohol or else he cannot have a real saving faith in Christ that will give him eternal life. That kind of reasoning is ludicrous. It is not the free grace of God. It is bondage to performance instead of faith in Christ alone for His saving merits. A person may repent of their sins but still struggle with their sins after they are saved. **To incorporate the need for change, surrender, or absolute and unreserved obedience to Christ (perseverance in holiness), as part of the Gospel message and faith, is nothing more than a sham Gospel filled with the buckshot of works and legalism.**

Many of the post-Reformation confessions and creeds of the church also stress this Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance. The Westminster Confession, the French Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg catechism and others stress the idea of perseverance. In most cases, the thought of perseverance has to do not only with persevering in truth but also in good works or holy living. And this holy perseverance is to be the sole indication that a person's faith is real or genuine. The idea of persevering is usually always linked with holiness or sanctification. **The confessions developed the Puritan theory that assurance of salvation was to come through looking at a man's fruit or works instead of looking at a Scriptural promise.**

Listen to the Westminster Confession once again:

"The infallible assurance of faith [is] founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, *the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made,* [and] the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the

children of God. This infallible assurance *doth not so belong to the essence of faith*, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure.”

This view admits that the promises of salvation made in the Bible are a source of assurance. These promises, however, are not conclusive unless they are accompanied by the inward evidence of a changed life. The basic idea in this view is that assurance is something a believer must gather by deduction from the change that he sees in his life.

Louis Berkhof has said that perseverance includes holiness in life:

“It is hard to see how a doctrine which assures the believer of a ***perseverance in holiness*** can be an incentive for sin. It would seem that ***the certainty of success in the active striving for sanctification*** would be the best possible stimulus to ever greater exertion.”

Reformed Baptist, Augustus Strong, speaks of perseverance as:

“... the voluntary continuance, on the part of the Christian, in faith ***and well-doing.***”

John Murray said:

“Let us not then take refuge in our sloth or encouragement in our lust from the abused doctrine of the security of the believer. But let us appreciate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize ***that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end.***”

More recently, the Calvinist John Gerstner has said:

“Theologically speaking, it (perseverance) refers to the fifth point of the Calvinistic doctrinal system that true Christians will continue in faith ***and holiness forever.***”

Scripture tells us that all believers will live differently after they are regenerated, as we will discover in this study (1 John 3:9; 5:18). However, to say that all believers persevere in holiness to the end of their lives cannot be supported from Scripture as we see saints taken out of the world prematurely by Christ and other saints living in carnality for extended periods of time. Not all believers persevere in holiness as the Calvinist assumes. They will exhibit a different life to some degree and to some extent. They will bear fruit for the glory of God in their lives even though they may not necessarily persevere in holiness to the end of their lives. *A change of living will be manifested in a regenerate believer’s life and throughout periods of his life without necessarily persevering in holiness to the end of their Christian life.* If we understand perseverance in holiness to mean that there will be a certain amount of change in the believer’s life after salvation that will validate his faith in Christ, then we must agree with this teaching even as James explains in his book. However, the problem arises

among Reformation Theology today when they make perseverance part of the matter of saving faith to the extent that they mix holy living or obedience as a requirement of saving faith. **After all they say, “If saving faith must be a working faith (a faith that works), then it only makes sense that faith in Christ must be obedient and submissive to all that God says or else it is not genuine faith in Christ. Therefore, in the presentation of the Gospel and the matter of faith to people, we must make Lordship or obedience to Christ an integral part of the Gospel message in order to immediately verify that a person’s faith is real. ”**

Again, I quote John Murray who holds this popular view of perseverance:

“The crucial test of true faith is endurance to the end, abiding in Christ, and continuance in the Word. Let us appreciate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ **only as we persevere in faith and holiness unto the end.**”

The Reformed theologian of the 19th century, Charles Hodge has said:

“It must be remembered that what the Apostle argues to prove is not merely the certainty of the salvation of those that believe; **but their certain perseverance in holiness.** Salvation in sin, according to Paul’s system, is a contradiction of terms. **This perseverance in holiness** is secured partly by the inward secret influence of the Spirit, and partly by **all the means adapted to secure** that end—instructions, admonitions, exhortations, warnings, **the means of grace**, and the dispensations of his providence.”

Many of these writers will insist that it is actually God persevering through the believer’s life. It is not the believer persevering without God; it is God persevering through the believer’s life. Calvin taught this type of perseverance through the inward help of the Holy Spirit. His teaching on perseverance was much more than just preventing apostasy from the faith. It was also the teaching that believers will persevere in holiness unto the end of their lives. But Calvin reasoned that this perseverance was not to be mixed with saving faith or become a ground for assurance.

In a discussion on good works and the works that God works within us, Calvin said: “...we go on without interruption, and persevere unto the end.”

It is true that God does work in our heart and lives as regenerate believers through the infusion of His own life and nature. And for this reason we can live differently and victoriously. However, God does not perform works in our lives to make our faith in Christ real and genuine. The Bible never teaches us this. But here is the line of reasoning from Lordship Salvation teachers of today who stretch the teaching of perseverance to be included in the matter of faith in Christ. Unbelievably, they argue that God first regenerates the sinner in order that they can have God’s life and elective faith implanted within. This in return will be a faith that can be obedient or perform

works. They then reason that the works of holiness in the believer's life is simply the work of God and not the works of man. Therefore, these works cannot be looked upon as man's works but God's works (Phil. 2:13). Therefore, we are instructed to search the God-given and God-produced works of our lives to see if we are saved. Since God does the work it is not man's work. Therefore, we can live in obedience and know that our faith is genuine by looking at our works and not be trusting in our works since it is God who did them through us. In doing this, the Gospel is put under the disguise of "progressive sanctification."

This is one way to dismiss the idea of works as being man's works and create a false illusion about works as part of salvation. But the bottom line is this. If you are looking at your works as a necessary part of your salvation (whether God produced them or you produced them), then you are looking at works instead of at Christ for the basis of your salvation. Works are still works. We must remind ourselves, that in the matter of salvation, it is not what I look at that is important. What is important is what God looks at!

Exodus 12:13 says:

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and **when I see the blood**, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

Dear friend, it is God who does the looking to secure our salvation. What we look at does not matter one iota. God sees us through the blood of Christ or the merits of His Son. And what He sees is what constitutes our salvation. Lordship Salvation teachers will say that they agree with this 100% but then turn around and say that our faith in Christ must incorporate our works for Christ in order to be true faith. Therefore, **I must look at my life** of perseverance in holiness to determine if I truly have faith in Christ. The looking related to salvation becomes man-centered instead of God-centered.

Some Calvinists recognize the Arminian tendencies when talking about perseverance as part of faith. *Therefore, they change the word perseverance to preservation to make it sound better.* But all in all, they still are teaching perseverance in holiness as the part of true faith.

The Calvinist claims that perseverance means the believer will never be lost from Christ. Eternal security is then seen to be God persevering in us through the Holy Spirit to perform in our lives works that demonstrate that our faith is real faith. The continual works being brought to pass in our lives will **assure** us that we are God's children and that God is persevering in and through our lives. *The works will also give us the assurance that God is on our side and that we do have faith in Christ as Savior because of the persevering works in our lives.* Thus, God's works of obedience and submission indicate that we have faith in Christ. The saints' perseverance in holiness

becomes the sole factor of our assurance that our faith is truly in Christ and that we have salvation. This is the Calvinistic view of preservation. They bank their assurance on the works that Christ accomplishes through their lives and can verify that their faith in Christ is real according to those works. You will again notice that everything is based upon perseverance in good works. Where is grace in this picture of perseverance? So when the Calvinist speaks concerning the perseverance of the saints, what he really means is that they are eternally secure in Christ because of their holiness and works that are being accomplished in their life through Christ. This perseverance in holiness naturally means that they have genuine or true faith in Christ and that they can “reasonably assume” (?) that eternal life is dwelling in them.

Of course, they can only “reasonably assume” (?) that they have eternal life because they are mixing faith with works. *They are attempting to have a faith in Christ based upon their performance in life.* This is nothing more than legalism. We need to have another Jerusalem Council today for the modern Calvinist. They need to realize that nothing has to be attached to a person’s saving faith in Christ. I’m afraid that we have modern day circumcision disguised in the doctrine of the “perseverance of the saints.” **In most Calvinism of today perseverance means that holiness is intertwined with saving faith to such an extent that it becomes the sole determining factor of one’s saving faith and salvation in Christ.**

Listen to what they say. No, these are not Arminians speaking. They are Calvinists who are claiming to follow the Reformed tradition.

Murray said:

“But let us appreciate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end.”

Pink said:

“Conclude we, then, that holiness in this life is **absolutely necessary to salvation**, not only as a means to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity - **as part of the end itself.**”

“Holiness in this life is such a part of our ‘salvation’ that it is a necessary means to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in heavenly light and glory.”

Pink has also said in his book on interpretation:

“The twin truths of Divine preservation and Christian perseverance must not be parted for the former is accomplished via the latter and not without it.”

The king of Puritan Calvinists, John Owen, has said:

“But yet our own diligent endeavor is such as ***indispensable means of that end***, as that without it it will not be brought about...If we are in Christ. God hath given us the lives of our souls, and hath taken upon Himself, in His covenant, the preservation of them. But yet we may say, with reference **unto the means** that He hath appointed, when storms and trials arise, ***unless we use our diligent endeavors, we cannot be saved.***”

A later Reformed theologian (1797-1878), Charles Hodge, has said:

“The only evidence of election is effectual calling, that is, the production of holiness. And ***the only evidence of the genuineness of this call*** and the certainty of our perseverance, is a ***patient continuance in well-doing.***”

Boettner, in his book on Predestination, has said:

“We can never know that we are elected of God to eternal life except by manifesting in our lives ***the fruits of election*** – faith and virtue, knowledge and temperance, patience and godliness. Love of brethren. ***It is idle to seek assurance of election outside of holiness of life.***”

John Gerstner said:

“...The question is not whether good works are necessary for salvation, ***but in what way they are necessary.*** As the inevitable outworking of saving faith, they are necessary for salvation.”

And again Gerstner says:

“Thus, good works may be said to be a condition for obtaining salvation in that they inevitably accompany genuine faith.”

Packer has written,

“Christian faith means hearing, noting, and doing what God says.”

Otis has said:

“Those who do not love their neighbor, especially those of the household of faith, are yet lost in their sins.”

“It is impossible for a racist to be a Christian.”

Now let me quote some Arminian writers. The teaching is really one and the same as the Calvinists:

“Robert Shank has said:

“Keeping His commandments is not optional for men who would enter into life. It is an essential aspect of saving faith...There is no saving faith apart from obedience.”

“There is no valid assurance of election and final salvation for any man, apart from deliberate perseverance in faith.”

“Objectively, the elect will persevere, and they who persevere are elect. Subjectively, the individual is elect only as he perseveres.”

The Arminian Guy Duty says:

“True faith reveals itself in continual obedience to Christ’s conditions for salvation.”

“There is no cleansing from sin and no salvation, without a continual walking in God’s light.”

The Lutheran Expositor Lenski said this about Paul the apostle:

“Paul regards his work with extreme seriousness. The fact that he is an apostle is not yet proof to him that he will be saved (1 Cor. 9:24-27). He knows the test that he must face.”

Both the Calvinist and Arminian sound very similar in the ultimate outworking of their particular systems. They both agree that works are connected to saving faith in some way. The Calvinist in the Reformed teaching of perseverance claims that works come on the backside of true faith but are necessary for faith to be real. They link works with saving faith in this manner. Works are not only the fruit of faith but also part of faith. As we have already discussed and verified, Reformed Lordship teachers also stress obedience as part of the Gospel presentation. This actually frontloads the Gospel with works as well. A person’s faith must consist of obedience in order for that faith in Christ to be real. The Arminian also teaches that works are on the front side of faith and must be part of faith your entire life (the backside of the Gospel) in holy living in order for your faith to be real. In other words, you must practice works in order to remain saved. Your works will determine whether or not your faith was genuine. Either way, you get faith and works mixed together and create legalism.

Like the Arminian, the Lordship Salvation teacher comes along and puts works in the front and back of faith. They will say in their presentation of the Gospel that a poor lost sinner must be obedient to all of God’s commands in order to be saved and surrender to all of God’s Word. They must give up their sins in order for saving faith to be real. Then you must validate this faith as the Reformed tradition says through your life of ongoing works. Through your works you will have the “relative assurance” (?) that your faith in Christ is genuine. I tell, you, both systems are saying the same thing. They are only saying it in different ways.

Calvin and Luther emphasized the perseverance of the saints in good works and holiness to the end of their life was done in order to silence the Roman Catholic

arguments that pointed to carnality in someone's life and immediately said that this person is the product of the Reformation teaching of faith alone in the gift of free grace. In order to ward off these attacks Calvin and others simply stressed that those who do not persevere in good works or holiness were never saved or one of the elect. Nevertheless, these conclusions did damage to the doctrine of the free grace of God. If one had to persevere in some manner in order to be saved or be a true believer, then works enter into the picture of salvation and mars the pure grace of God without any works or performance of living. In the final analysis, Calvin also threw away the possibility of assurance until the final hour even though he paradoxically taught assurance based upon Christ. **The point is this. Whenever you stress a certain amount of striving and works (perseverance) to validate your faith in Christ, then faith in Christ becomes secondary. The object of faith is decreased and the kind of faith is emphasized.**

I'm convinced that even the Reformers feared the doctrine of free grace to some extent and as a result did not take the Reformation far enough. Because of the doctrine of justification by faith alone was potentially vulnerable to the charge of promoting license, the Reformer's simply could not let go of the notion that works played a necessary role or part in our final arrival to Heaven. We might also note that Luther's views on baptism were far from the free offer of grace view. There was a constant pull to go back to some ritualistic forms of Romanism. This pull is still going on today within the churches.

I am also convinced that a new Reformation is needed in Christianity today that magnifies the free offer of God's grace without any works attached to it. It must be understood that grace motivates us to live godly and is the only sufficient motivation to live a holy life. The motive for godly living is to be found in the grace of God. It is not to be found in the fear of losing one's salvation (Arminian) or the wondering if one is really saved (Reformed Calvinism). God's grace as experienced in the infusion of His own nature and life will bring a new motive and desire to live for God that no other man-made system can replace.

Titus 2:11-12 says:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Calvin and Luther's doctrine of the saints' perseverance in holiness to the end of a person's life creates a works mentality as the measuring stick for salvation and assurance. Perseverance can easily distort the offer of free grace and also seems strange in light of the fact that some believer's were judged and taken home because of their sin (1 Cor, 11:29-31) and others were turned over to Satan to be punished (1 Cor. 5:5). If every believer perseveres in triumphant holiness to the end of their journey, then how can there be differences of rewards at the Bema Seat of Christ and

why did Paul fear losing a crown (1 Cor. 9:24-27)? Why are there carnal Christians even though the Calvinist tries to get around this Biblical truth (1 Cor. 3:1-3)? Why do some believers overcome in life and others fail miserably (Rev. 2:26; Rev. 3:14-17)? It's obvious that not every believer perseveres in life the way that the Calvinist wants them to. Believers will maintain a life of change to a certain degree from the lost world, but they will not equally endure to the end in holiness and triumph. This will be seen in our ongoing study.

Most middle of the road Christians on this Lordship Salvation position will say that the whole problem lies in a misunderstanding of what the Lordship writers are saying. This is nothing more than a way to avoid the issue. For nearly two years I have read what they are saying and have waded through gobs of Reformation and post-Reformation material. There is no misunderstanding concerning what they are saying and what they mean when they are saying it. If words mean something, then we can understand what they are saying! They are saying that works not only follow faith (we agree) but they also are part of saving faith (we disagree). The Bible clearly reveals that works are not part of faith in Christ. They must be distinguished from works in every way. To include obedience or works with the presentation of the Gospel is a horrendous error that cannot be left go without exposure and correction.

Those who dispute the Lordship Salvation view have been charged with rejecting the teaching of the Reformation. As we have seen, this is simply not true. Even Reformed writers rejected the teaching of Calvin and Luther about the matter of faith and assurance. Although both had their theological downfalls, both of these Reformation giants were adamant about faith in Christ alone and developing assurance from your faith in Christ without any works in the picture. We must also remember that we are not obligated to adopt all the teachings of the Reformation period. As I have mentioned already, baptismal salvation was taught during the Reformation. Does this mean that we must teach this in our church today? False views were taught during this era that dealt with the Ransom theory which stated that Christ's death was paid to Satan instead of the Father.

Wrong views on election were also developed as well as postmillennial teaching. A distinction between Israel and the church and dispensational theology was not addressed. Does this mean that we are wrong today when marking out these Biblical distinctions? **We must simply understand that the Reformation fell short of expressing all Biblical truth. The primary emphasis was on salvation through faith alone.** But there were many other teachings that were revived over the years that were part of the early church and always in the Bible. We have had our own Reformation in Bible prophecy during the late 19th century and during the 20th century. Just because certain Biblical teachings are developed after the Reformation does not mean that they are wrong. They may simply be other teachings that have been revived after the long drought of the Dark Ages. Even the Reformers were charged with

newness when they began to teach salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. *Lastly, we must remember that the Reformation is not our doctrinal statement that we look back to in order to know and understand truth.* We must look into the Bible and relish the truths that have always been revealed for the learning and profit of believers.

More recently in the late 1950's and early 1960's two well-known evangelicals were involved in this volcanic issue. Everett F. Harrison and John R. W. Stott went head-to-head debating this issue in Eternity Magazine. Harrison took the position that teaches a non-Lordship approach to salvation and Stott took the Lordship Salvation approach as Reformed teachers and Reformed theology usually take.

Even more recent are the book discussions between John MacArthur and Charles Ryrie. They have been debating this issue as well. Along with them are numerous other writers and preachers who have joined the volcanic issue. I suppose that I will be another one of them as I delve into this issue. The molten lava has recently been spilling over the side of this erupting volcano and is flowing into the church.

What is the real issue? Maybe you are not aware of it. **The real issue is how man is really saved!** Those who teach Lordship Salvation actually believe that simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not enough to save you. Something else is needed in order for God to grant you salvation. You must be willing to obey Christ's commands and follow Him at all costs and be willing to be a total disciple or follower of the Lord's commands before you come to Christ for salvation. *This means that at the time of salvation you must be willing to fully commit yourself to Christ by forsaking every sin in your life and make Jesus Lord of every area of your life.* You must determine to follow Him and make a solid commitment to walk with Him or there will be no salvation for you. In short, you must surrender your entire life to His Lordship and love God supremely. *You must accept the terms of discipleship and submit to God's authority in every area of your life, or you cannot be saved.* In other words, surrender or submission becomes a condition for eternal life. There must be complete submission to all the will of God before one can be saved. *The Lordship salvation teachers promote the false conclusion that every sin in the sinner's life must be forsaken before a person can come to Christ and be saved.* **In summary, a person must turn their entire future life over to Jesus as Lord or Master. This is done by outwardly forsaking all of their sin and promising to follow Jesus all the days of their lives. When their sin is forsaken and their eyes are fixed upon the goal to follow Jesus for their entire lives, only then can they receive the forgiveness of sin and salvation. Lordship Salvation goes beyond trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior. It includes the teaching that we must obey Jesus as Lord or Master as a condition of eternal life.** This is the basic and fundamental teaching of Lordship Salvation.

There are three main points of summary:

1. We are to become disciples in order to be saved.
2. Discipleship demands the forsaking of all our sins. It demands 100% obedience to Christ in every area of our lives.
3. Therefore, in order to be saved, we must give up all of our sins and willingly forsake every sinful thing in our lives. We must fully surrender and submit every area of our lives to Christ. We must commit our entire lives to Him and be willing to follow His will for our lives the rest of our days upon earth in order to possess eternal life.

In short, Lordship Salvation is the view that a commitment to obedience must be a part of true spiritual conversion. The issue of salvation and the way to receive salvation is at the very core of Christianity. And confusion about salvation means disaster for the souls of lost mankind. This is why the whole issue is a volcanic issue. When debate centers on such a key issue as this, there is bound to be much smoke, fumes and lava. *This issue does revolve around semantics, or the understanding of what words mean and what is really required for salvation.* Many Lordship writers will try to explain that the problem is with “semantics” or the understanding of words. “It’s only a matter of semantics” is a popular saying today. They are right. However, many use this word “semantics” as a kind of scapegoat or excuse to teach what they want about the Gospel message and how grace and faith are linked to salvation. We must understand that semantics simply means to have the correct understanding of words. *The entire problem in the Lordship debate revolves around a definition of terms and what they mean in relationship to the subject and way of salvation.* The problem also revolves around the timing of discipleship. However, this debate strikes at the very core of orthodox Christianity and salvation and cannot be merely looked upon as a technicality over words and some trivial theological dialogue.

My desire for writing this paper is that we might be able to clear away some of the smoke and fumes of man’s heated debates and also stop the lava of man’s anger from pouring into the church. What we need to do is find out exactly where the problems are and then try to solve them in a clear and understandable way.

There are several areas of confusion and misunderstanding in this volcanic issue:

1. There is the confusion about the Gospel.

Robert Wilkin has said:

“Evangelicalism is in trouble because it is becoming increasingly unconcerned about clarity in the proclamation of the gospel.”

What is the Gospel? How do we present the Gospel to a lost world? There is no need to guess. The Bible clearly tells us what the pure Gospel is. The content of the Gospel is that Christ has died and now lives.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 says:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

There is the Gospel. Christ died (substitutionary death), Christ was buried (proof of His death), Christ arose again the third day (the proof of God’s acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice) and He was then seen by many witnesses (proof of His resurrection). This is not the special Gospel according to Paul or the Gospel according James or the Gospel according to Peter. It is the Gospel of Christ.

Romans 1:16 says:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

The Gospel is all about Christ and what He has done for us in His death, burial and resurrection. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of the Gospel message. Lordship Salvation makes man to be an important part in the Gospel message. Man must obey in order to make the Gospel complete. Obedience is intertwined with the message of the Gospel. **However, we must remember that the Gospel has absolutely nothing to do with the submission or surrender of other people!** Whenever you add other requirements of surrender, submission and commitment to this glorious message, immediately you destroy the true Gospel message and create another gospel (see Galatians 1:6).

John MacArthur has wrongly observed:

“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.”

The Gospel of Jesus was not different from the Gospel He gave to Paul. The word “gospel” means good news or glad tidings. It is good news that Christ has died upon the cross bearing our sins and the judgment associated with those sins. It is good news that He was buried and rose again the third day to actually bestow the gift of salvation upon our lives today (Romans 4:25). *The Gospel is not a set of duties to be performed.* The Gospel does not involve more strivings and more agonizings as we attempt to follow Christ. **The Gospel is the announcement of what Christ has done for us and not what we can do for Him.** There should be absolutely no questions concerning what is the true content of the Gospel. No matter what teachers are saying

today, the Gospel is all about Christ and has nothing to do with man. There is no special revelation of the Gospel according to Jesus or Paul. There is only the Gospel that speaks about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ on behalf of poor lost sinful souls.

Reformed teaching in one sense is loading the Gospel message with the additional means of works. They attach works to the end of the Gospel message by downloading works as the end result of salvation. They insist that a continuation in works are interwoven with faith and must be continually witnessed in order for you to have salvation and the assurance of salvation. **In doing this, Lordship Salvation teachers load the Gospel with additional means and conditions. They frontload the Gospel with works by insisting that faith and works are mixed together for salvation and backload the Gospel by insisting that perseverance in works is needful for salvation and the assurance of salvation through the journey of faith.**

When you add as part of the Gospel message that a person must forsake all of his sins and without reservation change his entire life around in order to be saved, then you clearly distort the content of the Gospel message as recorded in the Scripture. **The Gospel has nothing to do with what man does. It only reveals what Christ has done.** The Gospel is all about Christ. It has nothing to do with the transformation of society (social gospel), the full Gospel (so-called baptism of the Holy Spirit) or the transformation of the person (Lordship gospel). **The Gospel message does not include settling the issues that belong to the Christian life.** I do not have to pledge my entire life to God and give up smoking or other sins in order to be saved. I do not have to promise to forsake all of my sins and live for Jesus the rest of my days in order to be saved. This is not the content of the Gospel message. *Fruitbearing and following Christ and spirituality are not the content of the Gospel.* When you add these things to the true Gospel, you create a false gospel of works.

Rich Wager has said:

“But the lordship of Christ as a prerequisite for salvation places the emphasis on works rather than grace. God does not need anything from man. His salvation is an unconditional gift. Man’s role can be no more than that of a recipient who believes the gift to be sufficient payment for his sins.”

What is the main issue surrounding the Gospel? If we can answer this in a Biblical fashion, then many false gospel presentations will immediately fall by the wayside. *The issue of the Gospel deals with sin.* What is it that prevents me from having eternal life? It is sin. What is it that bars me from Heaven? It is sin. How can my sins be forgiven? The answer to this question is that sin can only be forgiven through the sacrificial and substitutionary death of Christ. Thus, we read that the Gospel is how Christ died for sins and was buried and rose again the third day all because of the issue of sin. The way to resolve the issue of sin is to look to the Gospel message about the death, burial

and resurrection of Christ. We must look in faith to this wonderful message for deliverance. This has always been true.

Isaiah 45:22 says:

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.”

Lordship Salvation teacher’s claim that they are trying to resurrect the true or original Gospel as Jesus and Paul taught it. Their cry is that the Gospel being preached today is a synthetic Gospel unknown to Jesus or Paul. How utterly ridiculous this is. Paul clearly tells us what the Gospel is so that no person (except Reformed Theologians) could miss it. The Gospel is all about Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, which freely offers to man the eternal forgiveness for all his sins.

The Gospel offers something for me. I do not offer anything to Christ in order to fulfill the Gospel message. We are the recipients of the Gospel message. Our commitment or surrender does not become part of the Gospel message. What could I possibly offer to God that would help settle the question of sin within my life? *To offer the years of your life as some kind of offering to God is inadequate or imperfect and can do nothing to bring the forgiveness of sin into your life.* If I vow to God my willingness to change, it will not bring forgiveness into my life. Even if I could constantly keep my life where it should be, it still would not bring salvation into my life. Only the message of the Gospel can bring forgiveness into our lives, as we believe and apply (appropriate) the truth of this wonderful message for our own lives.

When you start looking at the submission and commitment of a man to Christ as being part of the Gospel answer to settle the sin question, you have both distorted and diluted the Gospel message. Sinners need a Savior. Jesus died and rose again to be that Savior. There is no other message connected with the Gospel. There is only one Gospel, and it is clearly defined in 1 Corinthians 15. Don’t redefine it by adding or attaching some human element to it.

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

“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.”

This is what Paul the apostle concluded when he wrote to the Galatian believers.

Galatians 1:6-7

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

The Lordship gospel is another gospel. Of course, Lordship Salvation teachers will deny this. But what they deny does not change what they are actually saying concerning submission and surrender as being part of the Gospel message. The words “surrender” or “forsaking” are nothing more than different words that are strategically designed to replace another five-letter word which we call “works.” Submission or forsaking is not the Gospel message that Paul spoke about in First Corinthians chapter fifteen and the epistles. If you want to follow the Gospel according to Paul you had better not miss his crystal clear presentation of what the Gospel is all about. An imprecise gospel is not the true Gospel. The imprecise gospel of Lordship Salvation teaching stresses man’s part or what he can do in addition to what Christ has done. **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.**

A gospel that includes man’s performance is nothing more than a gospel of works. And this type of gospel makes Pharisees out of people. It creates people who are trying to earn or merit their way into Heaven. It’s the mentality that says we must perform or give to God in order for Him to accept us.

Luke 18:11-12 says:

“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, **I give tithes** of all that I possess.”

There is a desperate need to get back to the Gospel of Christ and not the gospel of man. People today want to talk about the so-called “full gospel” or the Lordship salvation gospel” and in doing so, they are actually taking away from the clear and complete Gospel of Christ, which centers upon what Christ has done and not what man can do or experience. The Gospel has nothing to do with the experiences or doings of man. Oh the simplicity of the Gospel! And yet so many miss the simple and grand message of the Gospel.

The Gospel deals with the person and work of Christ on our behalf. It does not deal with the surrender and discipleship of people. We must keep man out of the picture completely! I’m reminded of what the man said who was seeking for Jesus. “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21).

The Gospel message should be shared like this: “You are a sinner; you have broken God’s law and stand under God’s judgment. But Christ has died for you. He has taken your sin upon Himself on the cross. Christ has paid the penalty of judgment for all of your sin. Christ was also buried and He rose again the third day in order to give you eternal life or salvation before God’s presence. Change your mind and attitude (repent) about your true sinful condition before God and your efforts to save yourself. Place your faith in the finished work of Christ (the Gospel) in order to receive the forgiveness of all your sins and eternal life. Rely on Christ, plus nothing else to get you to Heaven. His offer of salvation is free. It is a gift to receive (Romans 6:23).”

When we keep Christ alone in the Gospel message the sinner can see the dreadfulness of his own sin and the greatness of God’s grace. To shine the spotlight on man’s submission or performance is to place man in the Gospel picture and miss the wonder of God’s amazing grace. Let’s keep man out of the Gospel and put Christ alone back into the Gospel message. The good news is all about Christ. There is no good news in man’s state or predicament. He is absolutely lost and unable to gain God’s favor through any commitment or performance. The good news is in the person and work of Christ. You might say that inside the dictionary of Heaven’s library there is only one picture that appears beside the word and description of the “Gospel.” It is the picture of Christ. Man is not found in the description of the Gospel. Man’s achievements in life are not mentioned in this heavenly dictionary. The Gospel is all about Christ. “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21).

2. There is the confusion about salvation.

Lordship teachers who follow the traditional Reformed teaching always view salvation as a process. They reject the idea or notion that salvation is an instantaneous event that occurs at a given time through the faith or belief of a person. The idea that someone can make a decisional act of faith in Christ and be certain that he is saved from that point onward is far fetched. The notion that a person can possess saving faith in Christ at a certain moment of time and know that he is saved is foreign to their system of teaching.

Reformed teaching will tell a person that salvation is not received by a one-time act of faith in Christ. The salvation seeker needs to begin traveling down a long dark road and start calling on the Lord for mercy. Throughout this long salvation journey, he must also strive to do what is right in order to bring assurance into his heart that he is saved or one of the elect. This is the Reformed and standard Calvinistic way of viewing salvation. **Salvation in their system of teaching is always viewed as a process instead of an instantaneous event.** The notion that a lost sinner can place faith in Christ at a certain point of time and know that he is saved by looking back at this time of salvation is rather foolish to the Reformed tradition. This is one reason why these teachers include discipleship and surrender in their message of salvation. It is because

they attempt to view salvation and faith in Christ as an ongoing process or pilgrimage where a person develops stronger faith in Christ and greater works for Christ. *These writers have always had an uncanny way mixing the two distinct phases of salvation.* One phase of our salvation is past, as we will see (salvation from the penalty of sin). The other phase is going on in our lives right now (salvation from the power of sin). However, when you mix the two phases of salvation together, it's like mixing ice cream with onions. It just is not good. In fact, it is down right deplorable. The Bible simply presents salvation in a different manner than the Lordship Salvation teachers do. **The Bible teaches that salvation is in three tenses.** A proper understanding of these tenses of salvation is necessary so one does not formulate wrong views about salvation.

a. There is salvation from the penalty of sin (past tense).

Acts 16:31 says:

"... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

This is salvation in its past tense. When a person believes on Christ for salvation he is immediately and instantaneously saved or delivered from the penalty of sin ("thou shalt be saved"). The Bible does not say that you are being saved in some long process or adventure of faith, which is proven by your works. Salvation from the penalty or judgment of sin is not a process that you must somehow feel your way through. Salvation is an instantaneous event in the life of the person who places a definite act of faith in Christ. **When you believe, you will be saved. Definite faith means a definite salvation.**

Jesus said in Luke 7:50:

"And he said to the woman, Thy faith **hath saved thee**; go in peace."

Jesus did not tell this woman to keep calling out to Him in faith the rest of her journey on earth so that she might some day realize that she was saved. He simply told her that the faith she placed in the Messiah at a certain given time was sufficient to save her for time and eternity! *Once again we see that definite faith means definite salvation.*

"I remember the day, when I met my Savior,
I remember the day He washed my sins away.
And ever since that day in every way
things have never been the same."

Luke 7:47

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little."

Jesus acknowledged that her sins were forgiven and that she was now saved. *It was a wonderful instantaneous transaction that took place in her life.* This woman's salvation from the penalty of sin was not a process that she had to go through. She could base her assurance of salvation upon the faith that made her whole.

Acts 26:28

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

King Agrippa did not say to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to start becoming a Christian." He recognized that he could actually receive forgiveness and eternal life upon believing the message of Paul and at that moment in time become a Christian.

Ephesians 2:8 says:

"For by grace **are ye saved** through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God.*"

Paul clearly says that we are saved from the penalty of our sins through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as seen upon the cross. *Our need for salvation from the penalty and eternal judgment of hell is not a continual matter that we must bring before God.* Paul clearly reasons that salvation is a once and for all accomplishment on the part of God. You are saved by grace! He does not say that we will be or might be or will know in the future as we evaluate our perseverance in good works. We are saved by grace! He does not say that we are on the road to being saved or that salvation is some kind of discipleship contract that we enter into with God and hopefully come out on the winning side in the end. No, Paul says that you are saved by grace! Salvation is a finished transaction! Hallelujah for this blessed noon day truth.

2 Timothy 1:9 says:

"Who **hath saved us**, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Paul once again says that Christ "hath saved us" which indicates a finished transaction of salvation. We are instantaneously saved when placing faith in Christ. This means that He delivered us from the penalty of our sin. We are not gradually saved nor do we gradually come to the realization that we are saved over the years of our lifetime. *The Bible does not say that we will be saved in the future if we just keep calling out to God in mercy and investigating our life of commitment to God.* Paul says, "Who hath saved us" and we can be sure that He has saved us from judgment because of our faith in Him. I remember one of the trios that the ladies sang in church. The words go like this, "Now I am saved, I can shout Hallelujah!"

You will notice that this salvation and calling are “not according to our works.” In other words, both the salvation we have today and the call of God to bring us unto salvation were given to us by God’s grace. God called us by His grace. He made the first move. He then saved us by His grace. It’s all of grace! This means that we did not deserve the call or salvation, which He gave to us. Actually we deserved the very opposite. We could not earn them (God’s call or free salvation); neither did we seek them in our depraved state. But God freely bestowed them upon us without condition or price.

This saving and calling of God upon our life is then further explained by the words “according to His own purpose and grace.” Why should God love ungodly sinners so much that He was willing to send His only Son to die for them? Why should He go to such a cost to save them from hell and to bring them to Heaven so that they could spend eternity with Him? The only possible answer is: “**according to His own purpose and grace.**” The reason for His action to call and save us did not lie within us. Rather, it was in God’s own great heart of love. God simply loved us because He loved us!

God’s plan to call lost sinners to salvation “was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” This means that in eternity past, God determined this wonderful plan of salvation and calling for us. *He determined to call and save guilty sinners through the substitutionary work of His dear Son.* He decided to give eternal life to as many as would accept Jesus Christ as Savior. The method by which we could be saved was planned not only before we were born, but even before the world’s were framed (Ephesians 1:3-4).

John 3:3-5 also says:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Here is obvious reasoning from the lips of the Master. *There is a definite time when you were born physically in the world. Likewise, there must be a definite time when you are born spiritually.* You are not gradually physically born over a period of years. You are born from your mother’s womb at a given point in time. In a similar fashion, Jesus says to Nicodemus that he must be born spiritually at a given time. He must not enter through his mother’s womb again for a physical birth; however, he must enter through the Spirit’s saving work in order to be born again spiritually or given this new life.

John 3:7

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”

Regeneration is given to us at the very moment that we believe in Christ. Regeneration then becomes this life-giving salvation from hell and damnation. Salvation from the penalty of our sins is not a step-by-step process that we must hope that we receive as we call out to God for forgiveness and examine ourselves to see how well we are living the Christian way of life. Spiritual life comes to us instantly and remains with us forever. The analogy is very easy to understand. You are born only once. You cannot be unborn.

This same truth is seen in Ephesians 2:5:

“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)”

Our regeneration or life is an instantaneous transaction that occurs at the moment we believe on Christ. There is no such thing as “process regeneration.” Immediately we pass from spiritual death unto spiritual life (John 5:24) and can know absolutely that we are saved from the penalty of our sins for time and eternity. The first tense of our salvation deals with an instantaneous transaction that occurs at the time we believe. We can now sing.

“Tis done, the great transaction’s done -
I am my Lord’s and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.
Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins!”

Post-Reformation theology does not want to sing this song! The Reformed or Calvinistic teaching which stresses that salvation is only a process and not a past event accomplished in our lives is simply false. It leads a person to think that he can’t be sure when he was saved or born again. It denies the instantaneous process of regeneration and salvation, which occurs when a person believes on Christ. It does away with the finished transaction of salvation, which is promised to the believing sinner. The salvation that prepares a person for Heaven is when he initially believes on Christ and becomes a child of God (John 1:12). And you do not become a child by a process. You become a child by an instantaneous birth. The idea or vague concept that a person must keep calling out for mercy and keep on believing and keep on dedicating his life to the Lord in order to know that he is saved is simply not found in the Scripture.

The philosophical system of Reformed teaching stresses works instead of faith alone in Christ alone for salvation. Therefore, they must do away with what they call “decisional faith” in Christ that saves a person for time and eternity. They would rather only talk about a continuing faith that is full of good works as the proof that a person is saved.

Past faith in Christ does not matter to their system of teaching. **In fact, true Reformed teachers cannot say when they were saved. And they claim that no person can know when he was saved. Salvation is a process and not a finished transaction.** This means that they view saving faith and salvation as some kind of mysterious process that begins at some unknown point in our lives. Where that point is nobody can know. Lordship Salvation teaching stresses that the process of faith and works in a person's continuing life that can start to give subjective assurance to a person that they are saved. This brings me to my next point.

b. There is salvation from the power of sin (present tense).

This is salvation in its present tense. This phase of salvation deals with our present day to day deliverance from sin. Each believer in his Christian walk is to be experiencing a present day deliverance from the habit and dominion of sin in his life. This is the practical side of salvation that deals with the sanctification or holiness in our living. This is that part of salvation, which follows our initial deliverance from the penalty of sin. This present tense of salvation follows the past tense of salvation. It is not to be confused with the past tense of salvation or what initially took place when we trusted in Christ as Savior. *Lordship writers always mix the two tenses of salvation together and attempt to prove that we need discipleship and sanctification as a requirement for salvation.* This is simply blending together something that the Bible does not blend together. In doing so, we create serious confusion about the way of salvation. There are many verses that deal with this present tense of salvation. I will mention one of my favorite verses that uses the word salvation to represent the present tense of the believer's practical deliverance from sin.

Philippians 2:12-13 is a very clear reference to this daily salvation:

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.”

The Bible tells us in this verse that we are to work out (not for) our salvation. This means that we are to allow the eternal life of God within us to have a daily transforming impact upon our lives. I cannot work for salvation, but I can utilize the salvation that I already have within my spirit by drawing upon the power of God's life to help me live according to His will and program (vs. 13).

This is clearly the present tense of salvation. Salvation is viewed as a present day reliance upon God for deliverance from sin so that we can engage in fruitful living instead of sinful living. Actually it is not you and me working, it is God working within us. The hymnwriter wrote, “Oh what a salvation this that Christ liveth in me!” *Here again we have the wonderful merging of the divine and human.* In one sense, we are called on to work out our salvation. In another sense, it is only God who can enable us

to do it. We must be doing our part, and God will do His. Our part is to simply discipline our lives in order to follow God. This involves cleansing ourselves from sin (2 Cor. 7:1) and walking in the light (1 John 1:7). This would seem to suggest that there is a human element (free will) of willingness to do what is right within our Christian lives. A regenerated spirit provides the believer with the capability to desire what is right and to want to do what is right. This is what is meant when the Scripture says that “it is God which worketh in you both **to will** and to do...”

The implication is that God, through the infusion of His own nature or likeness within our spirit, provides us with new drive and will power to live for Him. Thus, we must take the initiative to “work out our own salvation” by ridding our lives of those things that will stunt our spiritual growth and become weights in our Christian lives. But we can be sure that God has given us His own nature to provide this new stimulus to do what is right. However, we still lack the real power to do such tasks. The new nature provides the desire and drive so that we will want to discipline our lives and dedicate ourselves to God. But it is God’s own life that provides the fuel or power to actually carry out a life of discipline and dedication unto Him (“*God which worketh in you both to will **and to do of his good pleasure***”). Nonetheless, we must take the initiative to do what is right. We must work out the salvation within us by having the desire to change and by taking the initiative and steps to discipline our lives. This is where our free will comes into the picture. *But we must always remember that we make these decisions and take these new actions to change our lives knowing that God will give us the desire, power and capability to do them.*

God will not walk into your home and turn off the lustful programs that you are watching on your TV. He will not throw away your smut paperback stories or miraculously take the money out of your wallet so that you cannot buy those cigarettes that are keeping you in bondage. You must hand out the tract in order to share the Gospel with someone. God will not take the tract out of your purse and hand it to your neighbor. The Lord will not rearrange your working schedule on Sundays so that you can come to church. You must do the rearranging. You must take the initiative. You must make the move. You must discipline your life to follow Christ and take the necessary steps *to change your life for the better*. You must take up your own cross daily and follow Christ, which is the cross of personal surrender and sacrifice for Him! You must work out your own salvation or daily deliverance! **God will not do something for you, which you can do for yourself.**

On the other hand, God will give us the new drive, determination and daily assistance of power to actually rid our lives of sin and lack of commitment. The end result is that we can be transformed and continue to bear the new fruit of Christlikeness and good works. But we must choose (free will) to work out our daily deliverance or salvation in life through submission and surrender and discipline. God always honors a dedicated and disciplined life with power to accomplish what God wants that person to do. **When**

there is a human surrender and discipline to live for the glory of God there will always be plenty of divine will power to do what is right (“God which worketh *in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*”).

The old saying is true:

“The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.”

3. There is salvation from the presence of sin (future tense).

This is the eschatological tense of salvation. Our salvation has a future element attached to it. Someday the believer will be saved or delivered from the very presence of sin. This will occur when we receive a new body (Romans 8:18-23 – “the redemption of our body”). The coming of Christ brings the hope of salvation in connection with our body. It involves the glorious prospect of possessing a new body without the taint of sin.

1 Peter 1:5 says:

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

1 Peter 1:9 also says:

“Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.”

Peter talks about an aspect of our salvation that is “ready to be revealed” and links this with the coming of Christ (vs. 7b) and the future salvation of a person’s soul or life. This of course anticipates the imminent return of Christ. He could return at any moment. Because of the immanency of His return, our salvation is always “ready to be revealed.” Our lives could be delivered from our present state of suffering and fight with sin in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52).

Romans 13:11 also says:

“And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

How can our salvation be closer than when we initially believed in Christ? It’s because our salvation has a future tense attached to it. God’s saving program involves the future deliverance of the individual’s body from the present day suffering and battle with sin. It also includes the rewards that we will receive in connection with the redemption of our body.

The time is short. The Dispensation of Grace is drawing to a close. Christ is coming. Now let’s wake up from our spiritual sleep and get busy for the Lord (Ephesians 5:14). Why, because Jesus is coming again, and He is coming to reward those who are

actively serving the Lord. In view of the imminent coming of Christ and our reward with Him, we must realize that our salvation in its ultimate or final form is actually getting nearer every day. *Each passing day brings final salvation and deliverance closer to our lives.* The countdown's getting lower every day! What am I doing for the Lord today?

Although a person is truly saved when he initially places faith in Jesus Christ, and although he experiences the blessings of daily deliverance from sin, these are only the pledges of that glorious salvation to which he looks forward in the Day of Christ's return (Romans 8:18; 1 John 3:2). For when Christ returns, we will stand before Jesus Christ in a new immortal body that is free from sin and suffering and will be rewarded for our lives of service. The best is yet to come! Our salvation has a future concept attached to it.

We must always remember to keep these three tenses of salvation separate. Failure to do so will create wrong teachings such as healing in the atonement (a perfect bill of health for today), sinless perfection (eradication of the old nature in this life) and legalism (working to merit salvation). *Blending the three tenses of salvation together will breed theological error and confusion.* The Calvinistic tradition of Reformed Theology seeks to blend together the faith which is actually associated with the person's past salvation experience with the practical present tense of their salvation which goes on throughout the believer's entire life. They fail to see the distinction between the past and present deliverance of our salvation. They simply misunderstand or at least knowingly mix these two tenses of salvation.

3. There is the confusion about grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The Bible teaches with great clarity and simple understanding that a person is saved by the grace of God. "For by grace are ye saved" Can God make it any clearer than that? The word "grace" ("charis") speaks of God's kindness, good will and favor expressed to unsaved people within the world. God's grace is all wrapped up in the person and work of His son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The salvation from Hell that His son provided upon the cross, and offers to us today, is the very way that God extends His grace to our lives (John 3:15-16). God shows His own kindness, good will and favor to our lives by granting salvation to us through the Son. This is pictured in the Bible as an unmerited kindness or favor, which God bestows upon people. *God's gracious plan of salvation is a free gift, which is administered through the unmerited grace or favor of God.*

There are no added terms such as discipleship, surrender or commitment, which are attached to grace in order for a person to become a Christian or receive salvation. How many times have you read a tract or heard a supposed Gospel presentation that adds terms and requirements to the gift of salvation? I have read countless tracts that always seem to stress, in addition to God's grace, the need for man to follow the Lord and to be committed to Him.

Allow me to illustrate a few of them. One tract offers salvation to its readers in this way: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to save you and make a commitment to follow Him all the days of your life."

Another tract says:

"Surrender your whole life to Him and ask Jesus to come into your heart. Promise to attend church regularly and follow the commands of Christ for your life."

I will never forget one tract that was handed to a dear brother at a fair ministry in which I was involved. On the front cover was one rather large word. That big, black and bold word was "if." Everything in the tract, regarding man's salvation, centered upon the commitment and surrender of the person and gave the cross of Christ a secondary seat to God's plan of salvation.

Dear friend, beware of the Lordship Salvation thinkers! They are adding works to the Gospel of God's grace and are canceling out the pure grace of God. *The Gospel of a free salvation received through the free grace of God can become very hazy and confusing in light of such teachings that stress surrender, commitment and submission as part of faith.* These proponents of this lordship teaching may claim that they are not promoting a works gospel; however, their speech betrays them. They talk out of both sides of their mouths at the same time. One side is sending one message and the other side an altogether different message. Also remember that facts are stubborn things! And the facts are that when a man stresses obedience as part of the Gospel message, he has crossed over the line into the realm of works salvation.

The Bible also reveals another stubborn (yet glorious) fact that the gift of salvation by God's grace is not earned or merited in any way. God's grace is unmerited. It cannot be earned or bought by the numerous acts of man. This means that we do not have to submit to God or surrender our lives to Him when it comes to the offer of free salvation. "Not of works, lest any man should boast"

Can God make it any clearer than that? The "works" of man points to his human achievements and his efforts to please God in order to be brought into the favor of God through his own system of good deeds. *The Lordship Salvation teachers actually supplement the words submit, surrender and commit as substitute words which mean the same thing.*

MacArthur tries to explain that commitment is not works. He then goes on to say what works are: "Not by works is not contrasting faith versus repentance, faith versus commitment, or faith versus surrender. In fact, the issue here is not as simple as faith versus circumcision or faith versus baptism. The contrast is between *divine grace* and *human merit*. Human effort cannot bring salvation. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. When we relinquish all hope except faith in Christ and His finished work on our behalf, we are acting by the faith that God in His grace supplies. Believing is therefore the first act of an awakened spiritual corpse; it is the new man drawing his first breath. Because faith is unfailing, the spiritual man keeps on breathing."

His reasoning is that commitment or surrender is not human merit. They are different than works, which are human merit. This is nothing more than theological double-talk. If commitment or surrender are not a form of works then what pray tell are they? He doesn't answer this for us. Works are works no matter what you label them. Works have always been a way which man has tried to gain God's favor and kindness. This was true way back in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 4:3-5

"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

From the beginning of time, God has established the need for man to bring a sacrifice before Him in order to receive His gracious salvation and favor. When Cain presented the works of His own hands before God, God rejected them! God will reject all of your works as well.

The tendency of Cain is within all of us. *We want to offer God something on the bargain table*. The fruit of our own hands is something in which you would think God is interested. Maybe it's our lives of commitment? Maybe it's our promise to become disciples and complete followers of Christ? Maybe it's our desire to surrender all to Christ and become total Christians?

Friend, God tells us that when we come to Him for salvation that we need a sacrifice and sacrifice only! We need the free gift of salvation, which is administered freely through the grace of God as presented in the sacrifice of His only Son. When it comes to salvation, all of your promises to live for God and become a disciple of the Lord appear to God as nothing more than the fruit of your own doings. They are simply the fruit that you are promising to plant in your own garden of good works. The Lordship

teacher stresses that if a person does not promise to “do” these things, then they cannot be saved, since these promises of surrender and commitment are aspects or conditions attached to the Gospel message. They are the Gospel according to Jesus. Listen, God does not want your promised fruit. When you promise to surrender and commit your life to God, you are placing your own form of fruit on the table before God. God rejects your fruit like He rejected the fruit of Cain. **God is not looking for fruit when it comes to salvation. He is looking for faith.** God wants your simple faith in His sacrifice, the sacrifice of His own Son.

God rejected the fruit of the ground, which Cain brought to God, as a way to receive His grace. From the very beginning of time we see that God’s grace in salvation is always extended to the life of an unsaved person through a blood sacrifice. In the Old Testament it was the typology pointing to the sacrifice of Christ. In the New Testament it is the actual sacrifice of Christ.

Ephesians 1:7 says:

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Here we see that the blood of Christ or His sacrifice is linked to God’s grace. Through the redeeming blood of Christ, an unsaved person is freely granted the riches of the grace of God. That is to say, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, a person is redeemed and forgiven of all his sins. This is the way God showers His grace or favor upon an individual life. There is no human achievement or involvement in this redemption. God only grants redemption to our lives and the forgiveness of all of our sins through the untold riches of His glorious grace.

Romans 3:24

“Being justified **freely** by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”

We are justified (declared and decreed legally righteous) in the sight and presence of God through Jesus Christ alone! And this justified position before God is through the redeeming blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ (“redemption that is in Christ Jesus”). Furthermore, it’s free! God’s grace is free! How wonderful this is to contemplate and share with the lost sinner. When a person comes to Christ they do not have to offer anything to God but their faith. When it comes to salvation, God is looking for faith and not surrender or commitment. God simply asks the lost sinner to come just as he is and cast himself upon His free offer of grace. **Our hope must be built upon what Jesus has done for us and not what we promise to do for Jesus!** When a person begins to make promises to God about complete surrender, total commitment, obedience and following Christ, he can become confused about the whole matter of grace in salvation. *If surrender is something I must promise or do as a part of believing,*

then it is a work. When this happens, grace becomes diluted in that I can do something to merit God's favor and salvation.

All of these promises to be a disciple and follower of Christ *at the time of salvation* begin to cloud the matter of God's free saving grace. They begin to take on the appearance that the individual is offering his life of commitment and discipleship as a way to receive God's grace. It becomes confusing and contrary to the way God wants us to present the way of salvation. **In fact, the entire idea of offering God something at the time of our salvation is a subtle form of legalism. It is legalism in disguise.** All of our commitment, submission and promises to surrender our lives become like a legalistic lollipop that we can begin to lick and find satisfaction in, instead of the matchless grace of God.

William R. Newell has said:

"...to preach full surrender to an unsaved man as the way of salvation will just make a hateful Pharisee out of him."

George Zeller has said:

"My Commitment to Jesus Christ does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE. My surrender to His Lordship does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE. My love for the Saviour does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE. My ability or lack of ability to fulfill all the demands of discipleship does not save me. CHRIST SAVES ME BY HIS GRACE."

Charles Ryrie has thoughtfully stated:

"Human works are like termites in God's structure of grace."

Works eat away at the grace of God and cause grace to become weakened and destroyed. The matter of God's free grace is simply not understood by those who teach Lordship salvation. And if it is understood, then the whole matter of the free grace in salvation is made somewhat foggy, cloudy and confusing.

I have always been amazed how close historic and true Calvinism really is to Arminianism. Hear me out! One of the foundations of all tulip Calvinism is the absolute need for the perseverance of the saints. The very idea that the saints must persevere is misleading. It seems to place the Calvinist in the same camp with the Arminian. *What are the saints persevering for? Is it for their salvation? Is it for God's approval and favor?* Many Calvinists without realizing it do stress a works mentality for salvation. They claim that the perseverance of the saints points to the eternal security of the believer. As the believer continues to believe on Christ and strives for holiness in his life and sanctification throughout his walk, he can be sure that he is saved and one of the elect. A person will know that he is one of the elect as he keeps calling out for mercy, strives to live righteously, and perseveres in good works to the end of his life. In

the Calvinistic system, the assurance of salvation is heavily attributed to a person's life and walk. This is nothing more than an in-built system of legalism.

Michael Eaton has written:

“Arminian theology takes the warnings of Scripture as relating to salvation and as warning against apostasy or forfeiture of salvation. Final salvation hinges upon the Christian's good works. Calvinism likewise has also taken the warnings of Scripture as relating to salvation. If a high Augustinian doctrine of perseverance is maintained, then the Calvinist sees the warnings of Scripture as addressed to the danger of pseudo-salvation...*Both assume that salvation and good works are tied together* (emphasis mine). In the one case salvation requires good works; in the other salvation inexorably and irresistibly produces good works. In both theologies salvation and good works stand and fall together.”

Reformed theologians talk about the perseverance of the saints. **But when they speak of this they are really saying that faith must be mixed with works, submission, obedience or commitment. Saving faith is construed as meaning a faith that also works.** For most Calvinistic writers, this is what is in their thinking when they press the teaching of the perseverance of the saints. *The thought that the saints persevere in belief is coupled with their perseverance in works.* They stress that a person's faith must always persevere in good works or else it was not genuine faith. *In doing this, they add works to faith or a life of submission and lordship to the most beautiful truth taught in Scripture, which is faith without works (Romans 4:5).*

It is true that a genuine believer will continue to possess faith in Christ as his or her Savior (1 Peter 1:9). Genuine faith in Christ for salvation cannot be lost. People who say that they “lose their faith” never had faith in Jesus Christ. They only had a spurious faith in the first place. It is also true that those people who are born again will not continually practice sin or unrighteous living (1 John 3:9; 5:18). This is something that will be true of the regenerate believer's life. *But God did not tell us this so we can use our changed lives as the sole measuring stick for eternal life or salvation. It is the Biblical promises concerning eternal life that we must cling to for eternal life or else we will change ourselves into a legalist.*

It's the promises of God's Word and not perseverance that is the main issue of determining our salvation. All fruit inspection and changes in living and lifestyle must be secondary when it comes to knowing that you have eternal life (2 Peter 1:10). We will have more to say on this later. When Scripture advises us to examine ourselves and prove ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5) it is not suggesting that we base our salvation on the way we live. However, it is emphasizing that the way we live will be an indicating factor that God's life is within us. Looking at our lives does not produce salvation in our lives, but it does give an added sign and encouragement that we possess God's life.

A changed life is the sign that we are saved; it is not the way that we are saved. Changed living adds the proof that we are saved, but it does not become part of the way that we are saved. Furthermore, changed living is not the way that we express faith, which is personal reliance upon Christ; it is the way that we prove the validity of our faith in Christ. There is a difference between works being a part of saving faith and works being the proof or result of saving faith. Faith comes first and works comes second. Therefore, faith itself is separate from works and has nothing to do with works. Works merely add the *proof* about a person's faith in Christ. Perseverance or works is foreign to the concept of faith alone in Christ alone. It is not part of the content of faith. It is only the result of faith. Faith and the results of faith are two different things.

We must learn to make distinctions where the Bible makes distinctions or else we will become confused in the definition of terms and even God's way of salvation. ***Things which differ must continue to differ.*** I suppose that the whole problem of the Lordship Salvation debate deals with the understanding of words and their distinctions and differences. Without maintaining a distinction in words, such as faith and obedience, there is only endless confusion and unneeded error.

Reformed theologians seem to stress that a changed lifestyle (works) is linked to our saving faith in Christ and becomes inseparably bound to faith or is part of what it means to have faith. Therefore, an undetermined amount of works or right living cannot be separated from faith in Christ. **They stress that the perseverance of the saints or a life of good works is a necessary requirement to know that you are saved since works are part of what it means to express real faith in Christ. There needs to be a constant flow of works to make saving faith real.** This is not true and is misleading to the free offer of grace. When a person makes works part of faith and look at works for the sole determining factor of one's salvation, they become confused about grace and their own salvation.

The danger of only looking at fruit as the measuring stick for eternal life is that it begins to blend initial saving faith in Christ with a needed life of separate works. It is wrong to link one's faith to these works since saving faith is independent of works. Faith alone in Christ saves without any accompanying works (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is not of works! How much clearer can the Bible make it? Faith and works are separated when it comes to the matter of salvation or expressing faith in Christ at the time of one's salvation.

We must simply understand that the Bible does not link together faith and works as *the way of salvation*. Therefore, perseverance in works is not to be confused with a continuation of real faith in Christ for salvation.

A person may persevere in faith without persevering in works as they should. This is very important to realize. This will be discussed later in our study. Although true faith will result in some fruit or change of life, this change of life varies in every believer. Furthermore, there are those believers who can become carnal and not persevere in their fruitful living of works as they should (1 Cor. 3:1-3; 11:30). *The problem arises when the ardent Calvinist mixes faith with works together as the way of salvation and the primary means to determine the assurance of salvation.* They make salvation a foggy journey of uncertainty which relies on the manner of one's lifestyle instead of on the promises of God's Word that deal with eternal life through faith alone.

John Owen has stated the traditional post-Reformation thinking on assurance. I will repeat what he said: "But yet our own diligent endeavor is such as **indispensable means** for that end, as that without it, it will not be brought about ... If we are in Christ, God hath given us the lives of our souls, and hath taken upon Himself, in His covenant, the preservation of them, But yet we may say, with reference unto **the means** that He hath appointed, when storms and trial arise, **unless we use our diligent endeavors, we cannot be saved.**"

Owen is clearly saying that perseverance in holiness is a necessary ingredient of salvation and the assurance of our salvation. Works are a necessary means to know that you are saved. This is outlandish and goes against the Scripture. This is nothing more than a works salvation. Faith is not mixed with works in order to gain assurance of salvation. As we will investigate later, this is exactly what Reformed teaching stresses. The idea of faith being linked with works for salvation makes works a necessary part of one's salvation and assurance of that salvation. In doing this, Reformed writers add works to salvation instead of relying solely in the grace of God to bring eternal salvation into their lives. God has already told us what the **means** of salvation are.

Titus 3:5 says:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

God saves us through the act of regeneration once and for and forever. And furthermore, faith without works is the only way that we receive God's grace and promise of eternal life.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith (not through perseverance in works); and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

John Owens and all those who look at their works or use what he calls their "diligent endeavors" in order to be saved have simply fallen into the trap of a works salvation.

They have taken this doctrine of perseverance to the outer limits and conclude that works are mixed in with the idea of faith. Thus, they produce the error of legalism, which is the very Romanish error that Reformation theology was opposed to.

I have heard some people, who were searching for answers, call into a live radio station near the area where I live. On the other end of the line is a hard-nosed staunch Calvinist named Harold Camping. He has been camping with the teaching of Calvinism for many years! He has Calvinistic coffee for breakfast and Calvinistic eggs and bacon! Sincere callers are asking this man how they can be sure of their salvation. He turns around and says that he cannot tell them how to be saved. The only answer that the strict Calvinist gives to them is that they are to keep calling out for mercy and keep living a holy life and doing what they know is right. Eventually they will have the assurance in their heart that they are one of the elect. What a terrible theology for assurance! It is nothing but works or human effort! My Bible teaches we can have assurance that we are saved based solely on the merits of Jesus Christ.

John 3:36

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life”

1 John 5:11-12 says:

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

When it comes to the matter of salvation and the assurance of salvation, there is no need for the believing sinner to persevere or to constantly be striving to live holy and right before the Lord. Living a certain way will never bring salvation to your life nor provide the assurance of salvation to your heart. The reason is because we will never know when we meet the standard that God really wants. Another reason is because all our acts of righteous living will never merit salvation before God. They are as filthy rags before His presence (Isaiah 64:6).

Along the same wavelength, there is no promise of discipleship or the promise of commitment and service involved with this matter of salvation and the assurance of salvation. We can have the assurance that we are saved by God’s grace because we have **believed** on Jesus Christ to be our Savior and have the Son living within our lives.

1 John 5:13 says:

“These things (the objective facts recorded in verses 11-12 concerning eternal life) have I **written** unto you that **believe** on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Please notice the order that these words occur – written, believe and know. You must first of all understand the **written** facts of God’s Word. They are written down and are

objective truth for us to see. What is written down and recorded for us to know? It is the truth that those who have the Son of God living in their lives have eternal life. Since the life of the Son is eternal then He gives to us His own eternal life (vs. 11-12). We must know and understand what God has written down. This is God's written record. Now you must **believe** this record by believing in the Son to be your Savior who gives you this eternal life based upon the merits of His death and resurrection. When you believe on the Son alone for eternal life, then you will **know** that you have it because you have believed in God's testimony or record.

The progression of words is important – written, believe, and know. Don't reverse the order. Lordship Salvation teachers want to base the assurance of their salvation on their works. But the Bible says that we must base the assurance of our salvation upon belief. Salvation and assurance of salvation come by belief in the Son. **Belief and knowing go hand in hand, not belief and works** ("unto you that **believe** on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life). *Jesus has given us His very own eternal and spiritual life so that we can know that we are saved.*

1 John 5:11 says:

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

This is the very life of God's Son that has come to dwell within our own personal lives through a definite response of faith in the person and work of Christ on our behalf. Christ's eternal life becomes infused within our spirit forever! And His life means eternal life to us because Christ dwells within us forever. This means that we can know that we have eternal life abiding within our spirit right now. We do not have to hope so and think so, we can know so!

Acts 16:31 says:

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

Romans 10:13

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

These verses and others that we have already studied (Luke 7:50; 2 Timothy 1:19; Eph. 2:8) very candidly teach that a person can stress faith in Christ once and for all at a certain point of time. This is what Lordship Salvation teachers sometimes refer to as a "**decisional faith**." As we have discussed previously, Reformed teaching stresses that salvation does not necessarily come into a person's life by a specific decision to believe on Christ or a certain act of calling upon Christ. There does not necessarily have to be a point of decision when a person accepts Christ as Savior or believes on Him. Rather, Reformed teacher's stress that salvation can come into the life of a person only as he recognizes his sin before God and continually calls out in mercy

upon Him and constantly commits his whole life to Him. Salvation is like a man who is rowing his boat across the Atlantic Ocean. He is striving to get to the other side of the vast ocean and sees no end in sight. All he can do is keep rowing and keep hoping and dreaming of the day that he will reach the shore. This is the way Puritan Calvinism views salvation.

The Reformed view of salvation and eternal security is really only a reworking of Arminianism. It places a heavy emphasis upon works as a way of knowing that you are saved. It is true that all believers do bear fruit of some kind (Matthew 13:8); however, it is rather obvious that not all believers constantly persevere in the fruit of Christlikeness and good works. In fact, God does remove believers from this earth prematurely because of their sin and lack of fruit and testimony for Christ (1 John 5:16). When a believer depends upon his performance of works as a determining factor or the yardstick to measure his salvation, he will eventually doubt his salvation. This is because he will realize his many failures in life and his inability to measure up to God's standards.

The assurance that high Calvinism teaches is at best a **subjective assurance** based upon the performance of a person's life. Their assurance through perseverance will always lead to underlying doubts. You simply can't be sure that you are saved if your salvation is based upon your matter of living instead of the promises of God's Word.

John MacArthur states the position clearly when he says:

"Some assurance belongs to the essence of faith, but believing does not necessarily bring *full* assurance."

The Westminster Confession of Faith, drawn up in 1646, distinguished faith from assurance. The Confession included this:

[CHAPTER 18] SECTION III.—This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure.

In other words, the Westminster Confession taught that assurance is something distinct from the essence of faith alone in Christ. Thus, a person can become a genuine believer and yet remain unsure of his salvation. To the Westminster divines, assurance was possible - even highly desirable - but not automatic. They believed that some Christians need to "wait long" and wrestle with God before He grants them assurance. Most of the *Puritans* (sixteenth and seventeenth-century English Reformers) shared this view on assurance. They began to look for assurance outside

of faith alone in the objective truth and promises of God's Word. Instead, they began to look at their own lives to determine assurance. This was a serious departure from Reformation assurance and began to mix faith and works together.

I want to explain to you what happens when you get your eyes off of grace and onto perseverance or man's performance as the key-determining factor for eternal life. When you only look at your performance instead of the promises you will begin to doubt your salvation. Lordship Salvation teachers mix grace with words such as "law" and "conditions." They call their assurance of salvation as a "lesser type of certainty" and the "best option." A little outline on the Reformed view of assurance as it departs from grace will be helpful at this point to expose what they actually believe. And what they believe is going to come from their own writings and beliefs. This is not what I say they believe about assurance; it is what the proponents of Lordship Salvation teach.

1. The Lordship Salvation teaching on assurance refers to assurance as an option.

The Reformed view of assurance is not based solely upon God's grace. Therefore, it breeds uncertainty. The popular writer R. C. Sproul is a very articulate spokesman for the view that assurance is not certainty. A few years back he described his own struggles with assurance, and in so doing he explained his view of assurance:

"There are many people in this world who are not saved, but who are convinced that they are. ***The presence of such people causes genuine Christians to doubt their salvation*** (emphasis mine). After all, we wonder, suppose I am in that category? Suppose I am mistaken about my salvation and am really going to hell? How can I know that I am a real Christian?

A while back I had one of those moments of acute self-awareness that we have from time to time, and suddenly the question hit me: 'R. C., what if you are not one of the redeemed? What if your destiny is not heaven after all, but hell.' Let me tell you that I was flooded in my body with a chill that went from my head to the bottom of my spine. I was terrified.

I tried to grab hold of myself. I thought, 'Well, it's a good sign that I'm worried about this. Only true Christians really care about salvation.' ***But then I began to take stock of my life, and I looked at my performance*** (emphasis mine). My sins came pouring into my mind, and ***the more I looked at myself***, the worse I felt. I thought, 'Maybe it's really true. Maybe I'm not saved after all.'

I went to my room and began to read the Bible. On my knees I said, 'Well, here I am. I can't point to my obedience. There is nothing I can offer. I can only rely on Your atonement for my sins. I can only throw myself on Your mercy. ***Even then I knew that***

some people flee to the cross to escape hell, not out of a real turning to God (meaning to outwardly follow God and surrender their life to Him). I could not be sure about my own heart and motivation. Then I remembered John 6:68. Jesus had been giving out hard teaching, and many of His former followers had left Him. When He asked Peter if he also was going to leave, Peter said, ‘Where else can I go? Only You have the words of eternal life.’ In other words, Peter was also uncomfortable, but he realized that **being uncomfortable with Jesus was better than any other option!**”

What a sad conclusion concerning assurance! To Sproul, the certainty of his salvation is nothing more than “being uncomfortable with Jesus.” And this is the only option or best option that we have to know that we have eternal life or the assurance of our salvation. It is the option of being uncomfortable with Jesus. How utterly ridiculous this type of talk is. My friend, the best option is not being uncomfortable with Jesus, it’s certainty with Jesus!

Jesus said in John 6:47

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

When Peter said in John 6:68, “...thou hast the words of eternal life” he was not doubting his salvation and hoping that Jesus would tell him if he was saved or could have eternal life. Peter already knew that he had eternal life based upon what Jesus taught and said to the disciples and to others concerning life (John 2:11; 3:16-17, 36; 4:10; 6:47, 63). Jesus had spoken the words that dealt with eternal life and Peter believed those words. What Jesus had said about eternal life was true. And to leave Christ was to miss what Jesus said about eternal life. There was no other place or person to turn to. Only Jesus gave the promise of eternal life. Peter was not doubting his salvation as Sproul seems to indicate. Peter was indicating his belief in what the Lord had already said about eternal life and was banking His eternal destiny upon the promises that Jesus gave concerning eternal life. Sproul tries to turn Peter’s assurance into Peter’s doubt! He turns certainties into options.

Other Lordship Salvation writers will suggest this lack of assurance philosophy by using the statement of the man in Mark 9:24 who said, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” But this statement was given by the father of a demon-possessed boy. The father believed that Jesus could heal the boy and Jesus healed him (vs. 26). *The belief of this father had nothing to do with eternal life. The context reveals that his belief dealt with the matter of healing and not eternal life.* Furthermore, the father was requesting that Jesus would help his unbelief, which would indicate that his faith was a weak and faltering faith. This is like our faith so many times in life. It’s a faith that it is not strong and mature. But Jesus honored the faith that this father did have however little or weak it was and cast out the demon within his son.

The point is this. The father's request should not be taken to mean that believers cannot know for sure that they have eternal life. It is not to be misconstrued as meaning that we must constantly be developing our faith in order to know that we have eternal life. *This is a request that dealt with the matter of healing and not the assurance of eternal life.* To relate this passage about healing with the clear-cut promises that Jesus gave about eternal life is simply faulty interpretation. And I might remind you that Jesus is never pleased about our lack of faith in who He is and what He says. The father's weak faith was not an example of how believers should manifest faith, as Hebrews chapter eleven will verify. Our faith in what God has done or promised must be strong. Therefore, when you doubt what Jesus has said about the promise of eternal life and what He has given you, then you are very weak in your faith. But Jesus is looking for strong faith in what He has promised and not weak faith.

John 11:25-26

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Sproul and Reformed theologians say that they believe in this promise of eternal life. *But this belief is a gradual belief that centers upon an examination of their lives and how they have been following Christ. They turn faith and the promise of eternal life into a gradual process of following or perseverance.* Lordship Salvation teachers claim that they believe what Jesus said about eternal life, they just have not figured out how they can really know that they have eternal life or if they have it! Who is to say how much perseverance in good works is needed in order to really persevere? How many works does it take? How much fruit does it take? How much change in life is necessary in order to know that you are saved? This is why Reformed teaching breeds uncertainty about eternal life and why people lack assurance when it comes to salvation. It's because they are looking at themselves instead of at Christ and His promises about eternal life.

In actuality, Reformed teachers doubt the promises that Jesus gave concerning eternal life because they look at their lives or perseverance as the sole measuring stick for their assurance. Therefore, sooner or later they begin to lack assurance and falter in their faith and then try to find verses like Mark 9:24 to condone their lack of faith in God's clear promises. This is utter nonsense!

In this statement by Sproul in the above section, we see how reformed thinkers talk about not looking to their obedience for the assurance of their salvation. But in the same breath they talk about looking to their own life and performance to give them tentative (not definite or unsure) assurance instead of looking at the promises of God's Word concerning eternal life through belief. In other words, they talk out of both sides of their mouth at the same time. In pressing their teaching of perseverance as the sole

ground for assurance they lack assurance because they are not clinging to the promises of eternal life that Jesus gave which were based solely upon belief.

2. The Lordship Salvation teaching on assurance contains doubts.

Dr. Richard Belcher, author of *A Layman's Guide to the Lordship Controversy*, spoke several years ago on a Dallas radio talk show. Here are a few questions that he answered concerning assurance from a Bible believing individual who taught that eternal life was a free gift without any requirements of discipleship or surrender. Here are some of the questions and answers. The answers might shock you. But they are the only way that you can answer these questions if you lack assurance of your salvation and trust in your perseverance as the ground of your assurance.

Question: Is it possible for any Christian to have 100% certainty that they are saved and that they can't lose it (salvation) if the quality of my lifestyle has something to do with my assurance? In other words, can I be absolutely sure that I'm saved?

Answer: Well, the question is, can anyone have 150% definite, positive you know [assurance].

Question: Right, that's my question.

Answer: Well, my question is, can even the one who is walking with the Lord and knows the Lord **and is submitted to the Lord** and is full of God's Spirit have such absolute certainty? He will have **an assurance** but that is not to say that there will never be any questions of doubt. But the Spirit of God overcomes the questions of doubt and grants assurance. See, what you're doing is putting assurance in the category of percentages and I don't like to do that.

Question: Are you 100% completely sure that you are going to Heaven?

Answer: I have **an assurance** that I am saved, **but** I am still in this body and I am human and in the passing of time there can be some questions in one's mind, but the Spirit of God witnesses to my spirit that I'm saved.

Question: Is it possible that you're not saved?

Answer: **Well, there are various means whereby I look at my life to see if I give evidence of salvation.** Not only the witness of the Holy Spirit, but there are other means whereby I look to see if I'm saved, like Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13: "Examine yourselves whether you're in the faith." And I seek to do that as well as the witness and testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Do you get drift of this discussion? This man could not come right out and put assurance in 100% categories. He could not say for certain that he has eternal life. He was simply beating around the bush because he teaches the doctrine of perseverance instead of faith alone in Christ's promises of eternal life. His statement, "I am still in the body and I am human" is a nice way of saying that we cannot know for sure that we have eternal life. We are left with an assurance that includes doubts. His comments go back and forth as he tries to create a middle of the road position on assurance.

In essence, he is saying that assurance contains some doubts. *That's like saying that belief contains some unbelief.* When you have doubts, then you don't have assurance. You only have wishful thinking and a foggy hope-so type of future. This certainly is not assurance. ***When one must question whether or not they have eternal life, then they are not sure that they have it.*** Of course, the Lordship Salvation writers will tell us that we just do not understand what they are saying. Yes, we do understand. We understand that they don't have real assurance. When you ask a man a straight question and get a crooked answer then you know that he does not have real assurance of eternal life. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in good works does not promote 100% assurance. It produces possibilities and options and hope-so talking, but it does not produce assurance.

Only the eternal promises of God's Word can produce assurance.

Romans 10:9-10

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

R. T. Kendall, a leading expert on Calvinism responds to all of this type of works/faith assurance by saying: "Whoever once truly believes that Jesus was raised from the dead, and confesses that Jesus is Lord, will go to heaven when he dies. But I will not stop there. Such a person will go to heaven when he dies no matter what work (or lack of work) may accompany such faith."

3. The Lordship Salvation teaching on assurance views assurance as a lesser type of certainty.

In an article entitled, "Seed thoughts on Lordship Salvation, Dr. James Sawyer criticizes believers for suggesting that assurance is certainty akin to the certainty that the equation $2 + 2 = 4$. Listen to this double talk that sounds like a course in philosophy rather than Biblical truth:

“Certainty falls into several categories. (1) Mathematical certainty: In the abstract theoretical and ideal world, we can know things with absolute certainty. There are no contingencies to qualify a reality, thus, **there can be certain knowledge in the truest sense.** (2) Empirical certainty: This is demonstrated by the scientific method in the real world, as opposed to the ideal world of mathematics. (3) Legal certainty: This involves proof by evidence, given by witnesses. It, however, admits the possibility of depending on the truthfulness and credibility of the witnesses. 4. Moral certainty: This is the realm of psychological certainty. **It is obvious that nearly all human knowledge outside the realm of mathematics fails the test of absolute certainty.**

Likewise, salvation is not something which can be analyzed in a test tube, thus it does not fall in the realm of scientific certainty (psychological – mind certainty). **Salvation falls in the realm of contingent reality**, the variety of which cannot be tested. Thus, it is impossible from a psychological perspective to achieve the mathematical level of certainty for which Wilkin (a free grace writer) seeks.”

Let me just say that the Bible knows nothing of Sawyer’s four types of certainty. When he talks about certainty he is really talking about uncertainty. Such double talk is full of nonsense. For Sawyer all "certainty" outside of mathematical certainty is less than “certain knowledge in the truest sense.” In other words, what he calls *moral certainty* is not really certainty at all. Since all biblical truth falls into Sawyer's fourth category, if he is right, one cannot be certain of *anything* reported or promised in Scripture. In that way of thinking, we aren't sure that Jesus rose from the dead. Or that He is God. Or that the Scriptures are without error. Or that there really is life beyond the grave. Or that the Gospel is true.

There must, according to Sawyer’s definition of certainty, always be a certain degree of uncertainty to salvation. If this is true then there is a degree of uncertainty to the virgin birth, deity, death and resurrection of Christ and the inspiration of Scriptures. The Scriptural promise of everlasting life is not some kind of lesser degree of certainty – whatever that might be! It is 100% certainty based upon the promises of God. Do not reduce eternal life to "the realm of contingent reality." This is the biggest pile of unbelief that I have heard in a long time. And all of it is said in the name of Calvinism as man tries to defend the perseverance of the saints. May I say that Martha was just as sure of the promise of Jesus in John 11:25-26 as she was that $2+2=4$.

4. The Lordship Salvation teaching on assurance is subjective.

Subjective simply means that whatever we believe is based on experience instead of facts. Subjective assurance is rooted in people. Objective relates to stated facts and promises. The Bible teaches that assurance is objective because it rests on the promises of an absolutely trustworthy God.

John 11:25-26

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

There is nothing subjective in this whatsoever. What we see in this statement by Jesus is objective truth that must be believed and not experienced. Eternal life is based upon objective promises and not subjective experiences. We simply believe what Jesus has said. **Jesus did not say that we must experience what He said. He is asking us to believe what He has said!** But the Lordship Salvation teachers will not believe it. They must have their own life of perseverance enter into the picture.

Robert Boyd was correct when he said:

“The grounds of assurance are more objective than subjective; they are not so much within us than without us. Hence, the basis of assurance must rest on sufficient objective evidence.”

But in the September 1993 issue of *Dispensationalism in Transition*, Dr. Kenneth Gentry wrote something altogether different:

“Assurance is subjective, rooted in the heart of the believer. If we say assurance is essential to saving faith, then we are ultimately saying no man is saved in Christ until he has come to believe that Christ has saved him forever. This would not involve faith in Christ for salvation, but faith in faith. R.L. Dabney rightfully notes that this requires a revelation beyond the Scriptures because *the Bible does not specifically speak to the individual in question*. Nowhere in the Bible do we learn, for instance, that Ken Gentry is among the elect.”

Gentry is not alone in this view. Many Reformed teachers will suggest that the only people in the Bible who knew for sure that they had eternal life were those who had their names mentioned as being in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3). This kind of reasoning is absolutely absurd. Calvinists will go to extremes to try and prove their **subjective assurance** through perseverance instead of **objective assurance** through the promises of God’s Word which teaches the assurance of instantaneous regeneration and eternal life at a given point in time. The idea that only God knows who is saved is absolutely foreign to Scripture. Certainly God knows who is saved (2 Timothy 2:19) but this does not remove the fact that believers can rest in the promises of God and know that they have eternal life.

The Bible teaches that every believer can know that they are saved by believing the promise and testimony of the trustworthy God (1 John 5:9-13). **Certainty is found in taking God at His Word.** The only way a believer can lack assurance is stop believing the promise of God and start looking at his fruit or works as the measuring stick for

eternal life. And when you stop believing the promises about eternal life you will lose your assurance but not your life. Do you realize that every person who is saved possesses eternal life? You may doubt that you have eternal life, but that will not change the truth that you have it. So why don't you believe the promises and rest in the wonderful plan and provision of God's amazing grace? You can be sure!

As we have seen, the Reformed writers suggest that assurance is always subjective or based upon one's manner of living. This lines up with their theory about the perseverance of the saints or that we can measure our salvation by the kind of fruit that we have in life and how we persevere in good works throughout our entire lives. The Calvinistic writers like to disassociate assurance from Christ's promises of eternal life so they can press their doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

Amazing, as it may seem, there are many Reformed Lordship Salvation teachers who actually stress that salvation cannot be lost. However, the catch is that you cannot really know that you have it. After all, how comforting would it be to know that salvation can't be lost but not know that you really have it?

All of this can be avoided if a person will only trust in Jesus Christ to save him without works or living as a requirement attached to faith. Faith must be separated from works at all times.

John 6:47

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

John 11:26

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

You can be sure that you have eternal life. Just believe what Christ has said! If you believe Him, then you will know that you have eternal life. It is just as simple as this. The question is this. Do you believe what He has said?

Merrill F. Unger said:

"When men begin to interject human faithfulness and human works into the question of their eternal salvation, they take it off the rock of Christ's finished work and place it upon a flimsy basis."

Absolute assurance of salvation is impossible with classic Calvinism and Lordship Theology. This is because works are inevitably the outcome of true salvation. A person can only know if they are saved by the presence of good works. Since no person is perfect, then assurance must be imperfect as well. Therefore, you may think that you believe on Christ and think that you had saving faith in Christ, but sadly be mistaken. You don't know if your faith is real because you don't know if you are one of the elect

because you are not sure how many works it takes to validate your faith and make your faith genuine.

MacArthur once said on a radio talk show:

“You may be a spiritual defector who has not defected yet.”

What utter nonsense! But this is Calvinism. You don't know how many works it takes to make your faith real and you can't be sure that you will not defect in the future. Maybe you are another Judas! Maybe you will not persevere to the end because God has not willed to work the perseverance through your life. Maybe you will be on your hospital bed and be looking over your past life and wonder if you can finally validate your life. And you will be taking your last breath looking at your works instead of standing on the promises! What a terrible messages this is to Christians who want to have the assurance of their salvation.

1 John 5:11-13 is worth repeating. After all, it is God's record!

“And **this is the record** (a written objective witness), that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. **These things have I written unto you that believe** (believing is how to have assurance – belief in the Son) on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Dear friend, I want to say to you today that you may truly be saved and have eternal life, and yet not know that you have it. What you need to do is believe the record that God has given to you! Go ahead, believe it! *God has said that when you will believe what His son has done for you, then you will know that you have assurance of salvation. And make not mistake about it. This assurance comes through your faith in the work of His Son and your unchanging union with Him, which brings eternal life into your spirit.* It does not come through measuring your works.

1 John 5:20 says:

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and **we are in him** that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, **and eternal life.**”

When you believe in God's record, which is to believe on the Son by faith, you will know that the Son's life has become yours. The Son, who is God Himself, has come into your own life and given you His very own eternal life. My friend, when you believe this to be true, then you can be released from a tremendous bondage and fear that God never intended you to have. You will know that you have eternal life simply because God says that you have it and because He will give you this assurance in your heart by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. *Faith in the promises of God's Word*

is the only way to have assurance. God is appealing to your faith. And you must have faith in His record. It's faith in what God has said in His Word (1 John 5:11-12).

It's interesting that Lordship Salvation teachers are reluctant to talk about assurance of salvation with new believers and children for fear that they might defect and not be one of the elect. Maybe their faith in Christ alone was not genuine. They need time to live their life and produce works in order to prove that their faith in Christ is genuine. I ask you, did Paul doubt Timothy's salvation (see 1 Timothy 6:11-14; 20-21; 2 Tim. 1:8, 13; 2:1, 3 15, 21; 3:14)?

We can simply see that the system of the Reformed Theology of today does not teach assurance through faith alone in the finished work of Christ. It is faith alone in the works of man as well. One man claimed that on the basis of his life of works he was 99% sure that he was saved. But he then admitted that he might be far less certain he looks at his life in greater detail.

Walter Chantry writes a small book, which analyzes the Gospel in light of Jesus' encounter with the Rich Young Ruler. One of the chapters is on the assurance of salvation. Chantry argues there that no one can be sure that he is born again. He begins by downgrading the approach of linking assurance with God's promises. Listen to this.

“So many Christian workers feel compelled to do the Holy Spirit's work of giving assurance in their evangelism ... A sentence is added to the 'salvation liturgy' which is not so much addressed to God as to the sinner who is repeating the prayer. 'Thank you for coming into my life and for hearing my prayer as you promised.' Then the personal worker is to open his Bible to John 3:16 etc., and replace the word 'world' with the sinner's name. Then the misguided counselor is to assure the sinner with all the authority of God that he has been saved. A warning is added not to sin against God by ever doubting his salvation, for that would be to call God a liar.”

He continues: “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. The very practice of trying to argue men into assurance with a verse or two, and the ridiculous warning, 'Don't call God a liar' shows that even 'accepting the gift' requires only an outward response and a verbal prayer...”

After discussing a number of things, which may *hint* that one is saved, but which can't prove it with certainty, Chantry concludes: “Few today seem to understand the Bible's doctrine of assurance. Few seem to appreciate the doubts of professing Christians who question whether they have been born again. They have no doubt that God will keep His promises **but they wonder whether they have properly fulfilled the**

conditions for being heirs to those promises. There is no question that God will give eternal life to all who repent and believe. But they are discerning enough to know that walking an aisle and muttering, a verbal prayer does not constitute faith. The [Westminster] Catechism's doctrine has raised valid questions concerning their personal experience of grace which cannot be brushed aside. They are asking a legitimate question, 'Have we believed and repented?' 'Are we the recipients of God's grace?' Since the human heart is 'deceitful above all things' (Jeremiah 17:9), this is a valid inquiry. Since we read of self-deceived hypocrites like Judas, it is an imperative question. 'What must I do to be saved?' is an altogether different question from, 'How do I know I've done that?' You can answer the first confidently. Only the Spirit may answer the last with certainty."

I must say that if it is impossible to be sure that one has done what is necessary to be saved as Chantry suggests, then certainty or assurance of salvation is clearly impossible. Chantry tries to diffuse the notion that we can have assurance based upon absolute promises. He downgrades the absolute promises of Christ in John 3:16 and such like. And he does all this to defend the philosophy of Calvinism instead of the words of Jesus Christ. He also makes comments that would suggest that he believes that law or works should enter into the picture of a person's faith in Christ (the system that thinks little of God, preaches no law...). He also talks about Christians fulfilling the obligations or conditions of salvation ("...but they wonder whether they have properly fulfilled the conditions for being heirs to those promises"). His emphasis is on what one must "do" to be saved (perseverance) instead of relying on the clear promises of God.

Friend, perseverance is not the same as preservation! The Bible teaches the preservation of God when it comes to salvation and not the perseverance of the saints in good works (1 Peter 1:5). The believer is preserved by God without his own perseverance or practical day-to-day walk of holiness and sanctification. To say that perseverance is tied in with God's preservation is to build a theological system of legalism.

One Calvinist writer by the name of Arthur Pink has said:

"Reader, if there is reserve in your obedience, you are on the way to Hell."

Another by the name of John Otis has said:

"Maintaining an unforgiving spirit will surely destroy our souls in Hell."

These men with their "perseverance of the saints" syndrome have fallen into the "works error" even as they have tried to steer away from the teaching of works as a way of salvation and acceptance before God. I must say that this type of Calvinistic and Reformed teaching is what breeds forth the teaching of Lordship Salvation. The writers and preachers of Calvinism cloud the issue of free grace for salvation by adding the perseverance of the saints as a necessary part of their salvation. There is a great

resurgence in the Reformed teaching today. Because of this, the whole issue of Lordship Salvation, which is taught in Reformed Theology, has resurfaced and will continue to send a confusing message to the church today about God's grace.

When you start to focus on man then grace becomes distorted. Furthermore, when you try and base your salvation on works instead of assurance, then you will be led into the error of subjective assurance instead of objective assurance based upon promises. For instance, eternal life is promised to the believing sinner at the moment he believes (John 5:24) and we can absolutely know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). To doubt it is to question God's promises. *Grace leads to assurance but when submission, surrender or discipleship is linked with salvation, works replace grace and ultimately lead to a lack of assurance.*

Titus 3:5 once again says:

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us (past tense), by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”

Perseverance and striving in good works does not assure us of our salvation in Christ. Nothing we strive to do will bring salvation into our lives or the assurance that we are saved into our hearts. Only the promises of the Word and the presence of the Holy Spirit will give us the assurance that we are the sons of God (Galatians 4:6-7).

The moment we begin to offer to God a life of commitment, discipleship, surrender, obedience or service, we begin to add something to the grace of God and compromise the truth about how God saves us by His grace alone! **The grace of God does not need your commitment, discipleship, surrender or promise of obedience!** What grace needs is a broken heart that hopelessly realizes that it must cling to Christ alone for salvation. Grace is looking for a heart that does not depend upon any future performance or way of obedience or discipleship in order to somehow win God's favor or approval. Grace is looking for a heart that feels hopelessly condemned and has no thought whatsoever of trying to follow Christ in order to gain His approval.

Allow me to reemphasize that when a person has to promise to completely surrender to Christ and live for Him at the time of his salvation or for his salvation, then the whole matter of God's grace becomes cloudy. Many will obviously feel their own inadequacy and inability to live in such a manner. *Many sincere people whose hearts are burdened down by their bondage to sin will begin to wonder if they can really fulfill such an obligation. After all, if they could not be freed from sin within their present lives, what will make them think that they can be freed from their sin in the future.* We can clearly see how this presentation of Lordship Salvation discourages sincere people from coming to Christ and trusting in His provision of free grace (Romans 3:24) and the gift of salvation (Romans 6:23). And some who press this issue of Lordship Salvation

actually think they are doing the church a service when they can stop people from accepting Christ. *They do this by pressing the rigors of outward change, commitment and discipleship on poor lost souls to the point that they feel inadequate and unable to follow Jesus as He expects.* What a terrible roadblock this is for those who want to truly repent of their sins but feel unable to do what God expects of them. Heart-searching people who are lost in sin and tired of their sin may actually be discouraged from accepting or trusting in Christ as their only hope and Savior because of a false presentation of God's grace. *After all, when a person is unsaved, he knows nothing about following Christ and discipleship or victory over sin. He doesn't even know what to be committed to and what to surrender to.* He doesn't know the ABC's of Christian living. To attach other requirements to a person's salvation is to cause the riches of God's grace to become foggy and cloudy.

I was driving to a meeting in the Bedford Pennsylvania area awhile back. As I came to the top of the mountain, I ran into the cloud level. There was a rainstorm going on and the clouds had dropped to the mountain level. Those clouds hid the beauty of the spring mountainside. I was rather disappointed that I could not see the beauty of the landscape. In a similar fashion adding the requirements of discipleship, surrender commitment and service or obedience to the grace of God as seen in salvation, actually clouds the beauty of God's grace. *It hides the wonder of His grace which reaches down and saves a soul without any possibility of service rendered unto Him.* It veils the rich splendor of God's grace, which is bestowed upon a believing sinner without price and without any future commitment.

Isaiah 55:1 refreshingly says:

"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."

God is saying to a lost world today "Hey there!" You can come and receive of the life-giving waters of salvation and refreshment without any money! You can come to God through the sacrifice of His Son and receive of His salvation. Don't bring your wallet! You cannot buy or bargain your way into Heaven. Don't name any price when you come to be saved ("without price").

Lordship Salvation converts name their price when they come to Christ for salvation. They place their lives of commitment on the table and their years of discipleship as a way of saying, "There Lord, now you can take me. Look what I am promising to you."

The Bible says that when we come to the Lord for salvation from Hell, we can receive of the joy (wine) and abundant blessing (milk) that salvation brings without promising God anything or offering anything to Him. If I may say reverently, "The drinks are on the house!" Salvation is absolutely free for everyone who wants to come!

You must be saved by grace in an absolutely free way. There are no added requirements or specifications where one must promise something to God or accomplish certain goals in order to be a candidate for God's marvelous grace. God's grace is free! God's grace for salvation is received in an absolutely free manner.

Zane Hodges has written a book entitled, "Absolutely Free!" Although I do not fully agree with all of his conclusions as he exposes the Lordship Salvation view, I do agree with his truthful and very trustworthy and Biblical presentation of the grace of God. God's grace in salvation is an absolutely free gift received by the believing sinner. There are no requirements attached to the grace of God! It is absolutely free!

Romans 3:24 says:

"Being justified **freely** by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Many people turn the free gift of salvation through the grace of God into some kind of contract between the sinner and God. They also turn the joyous life of the Christian into some kind of grueling effort to live a certain way and verify that their faith in Christ is real. They do this in order to try to merit God's grace and gain acceptance before God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God*: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Romans 6:23 says:

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

There is no debate about it! There should be no controversy about it! The volcano should have never erupted within the ranks of true believers in the Lord. God says that His grace is received without price. It is absolutely free! His gracious plan of salvation as administered through the grace of God is received on a free basis. It is a gift to receive. ***How can salvation be a gift that costs us everything? A gift that costs us something is not a gift.*** There are no requirements or costs attached to the gift of salvation. No person must promise to follow a system of commitment, total surrender and discipleship in order to receive God's grace and salvation.

God saves us without any obligation. Salvation is a gift. Grace is a free gift! Everything is free! God will take you just as you are! He will take you as a sinner who is helpless and hopeless, a sinner who is absolutely at the bottom of the barrel. God will take you as a sinner who knows that you cannot live up to any holy standards. He will understand your recognition and true confession of your inability to follow Him. However, Christ will accept you for what you are and promise to save you without any

strings attached! "**Just come,**" **Jesus is saying. Come as you are without price or promise!**

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"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."

There is no power or saving merit in the promise of a man to follow Christ or the promise to surrender his life to God. There arises only the false notion that man can somehow win the favor of God through such a promise of dedication to Christ.

Robert Lightner has well said:

"Salvation cannot be a gift if the recipient must promise to surrender every area of his life as long as he lives to get it."

Friend, God tells us that when we come to Him for salvation all that we need is a sacrifice! We need the free gift of salvation administered freely through the grace of God, as seen in the sacrifice of His own Son. Whenever someone adds something to the grace of God we immediately move away from the grace of God into "another Gospel."

Galatians 1:6 says:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel."

Lordship Salvation teachers have in some sense removed themselves into the realm of another Gospel by their "add-ons" to the free presentation of the Gospel message. When we begin to add discipleship, surrender, baptism or church attendance to the free grace of the Gospel message, immediately we place ourselves on the wrong side of the fence. It is the legalistic or works side. What is the difference whether we add baptism or discipleship as a necessary prerequisite to salvation? There is no difference because it all boils down to the same thing – works! ***The whole movement of thought today called Lordship Salvation might better be termed "Lordship Legalism."*** These teachers are trying to bring "works" in the side door or back door. The problem

is that there is only one door that leads to salvation and it is the front door – Jesus Christ Himself!

John 10:7 & 9 reminds us that Jesus is the only door that leads to salvation:

“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

Let the Bible speak for itself. If works are involved in the plan of salvation, then grace must out of necessity be excluded.

Romans 11:6 clearly reveals:

“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.”

The principle is very easy to see. **Nothing can be by grace and works at the same time.** It is impossible. Allow me to illustrate this by the bowl of Chicken Rice Soup that I had for lunch. I don't like crackers in my soup because the crackers change the texture of the soup and give it a different look and flavor. Well, if you start with the Chicken Rice Soup of grace in one soup dish (“And if it be by grace”), then you cannot add any crackers or works in the same soup dish without changing the texture and dish of Chicken Rice Soup. In other words, if you start with Chicken Rice Soup then you will have to stick with just Chicken Rice Soup without adding any crackers or works (“it is no more of works”). When you add crackers to soup then the soup is no longer just soup. You now have soup and crackers mixed together. You have now created Chicken Rice Cracker Soup. Likewise, when you have just a bowl full of dry crackers or works (“But if it be by works”) served up in the soup dish, then you cannot mix the Chicken Rice Soup of grace in the same soup bowl and keep just crackers (“otherwise work is no more work”). Now you have created Cracker Chicken Rice Soup.

You see, if you want to eat the real thing, then you cannot mix anything else with that real thing. It's either all crackers or all soup. When you add soup to crackers the crackers will get all soggy! The message is clear. When you add the crackers of works to the Chicken Rice Soup of grace, then you no longer will have grace or just plain old Chicken Rice Soup. Likewise, when you add Chicken Rice Soup to the crackers of works you no longer have just plain old dry crackers. You have soggy crackers mixed with soup. In other words, you cannot have grace and works in the same soup dish and expect them to remain the same thing – grace and works. So it is when it comes to salvation. The two do not mix together and keep their same definition and meaning. It's either grace all the way or works all the way. So many today try to mix grace and works in the same soup bowl and create a new mixture of Chicken Rice Cracker Soup or Cracker Chicken Rice Soup. When you do this, both grace and works lose their real meaning and understanding.

Ray Stedman used to say:

“Grace is God at work, works are man at work.”

Romans 4:4-5

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Let's get practical. *A debt is something that you owe.* I'm sorry to remind you, but you must pay your car loan this week. You must pay your electric bill and house payment. I know it's a bummer, but it is a fact of life! At the time I am writing this paper, my wife and I are contemplating the immense responsibility and debt of buying a home.

There is no doubt or should I say, “debt” about it. All of us know what debt is. *Debt is something that we owe. Debt has to do with work and earnings. You must work in order to pay off your debts.* Furthermore, if a person works for someone else, then the very person whom they are working for owes them money. They are in debt to that worker. The individual needs to pay the worker for the work, which the worker has done for him.

When a man **works** for a living and gets his paycheck at the end of the week, he is entitled to his **wages**. He has earned them. He does not bow down with a spirit of gratefulness before his employer, thanking him for such a display of kindness or grace. He does not protest that he doesn't deserve the money. Not at all! He puts the money in his pocket and goes home with the feeling that he earned it and has only been reimbursed for his time and labor.

Paul uses this illustration about debt and says that when a person must work for something and wait for a signed paycheck on Friday, he is really waiting for someone to pay him for the work that he did. *A wage is something that a person works for and earns. But grace is something that a person receives which he does not deserve. Grace has nothing to do with debt.*

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”

We see that debt and grace have nothing in common. *Many people foolishly view God as someone who is indebted to them. In one sense, they think God owes a paycheck to them.* In other words, God is indebted to give people what they earn like and employer is indebted to pay his employee. People offer their little man-made works up to God, their life of surrender, stewardship and obedience. They offer it up to God and they say, “There God, take that. What do you think about that?” Then they expect God to repay their efforts by handing out the paycheck of salvation and eternal life to them.

Paul says that grace is a free offer to someone who has not earned anything. **Grace is like giving you a bonus check as a gift for work that you did not do.** When someone places his works or life of obedience before God to determine his eternal destiny and salvation, he is in essence saying that God is in debt to him and owes him salvation. The man is saying that God must pay His dues to him. God must fork out salvation to him for the work that he promises to do and has already done for Him.

How foolish this way of thinking really is. I have news for you. God is not in debt to us. We are in debt to Him. We are in debt up to our eyeballs! *We owe a debt to God, which we cannot pay. It is a sin debt of judgment and everlasting damnation in hell.* My friend, we do not have a ray of hope without placing faith alone in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Jesus is not going to pay you for the works of obedience that you do for Him. Jesus already paid for your judgment and my judgment upon the cross. He paid a debt we could not pay. He hung on the cross as the perfect Lamb of God and bore the penalty or debt of sin, which was full condemnation. He took your hell and judgment upon Himself there upon the cross. Jesus already gave us the payment. And it was the payment of His own life so that we do not have to pay for the judgment of our own sins.

Galatians 3:13 says:

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse (judgment) of the law, being made a curse (judgment) for us: for it is written, Cursed (judged) *is* every one that hangeth on a tree.”

Jesus already paid for your salvation and mine on Calvary’s cross. He has already paid for your judgment and mine. The paycheck has already been turned into God the Father. It’s already cashed! It’s in the bank of Heaven. Jesus said, “It is finished.” The Father has already paid for the debt of lost mankind through the offering of His own Son. Jesus took the judgment that we deserved and became the judgment payment for your sins and mine.

Don’t you ever come to God and act like He must reimburse you with the paycheck of salvation because of the way that you have lived for Him down here upon earth. God has already paid for your hell-damning sin debt by offering Christ upon the cross. Do not demand God to give you another payment of salvation for your little acts of obedience when the one and only payment has already been made. **God does not require two payments.** God has already paid salvation’s debt of judgment. **There is nothing else to pay!** God has never owed you anything nor is He required to give you anything. *Out of His own grace, He offered His son and paid for a debt that we could not pay.* I repeat. God doesn’t owe you anything! All you are is a worm of a sinner. You are a nothing! In fact, you never were something. Face the fact. You are a nothing. But God loved you when you were nothing and already paid for the sin debt that you owed to God. Now don’t you come to God today and ask Him to pay or reward you with salvation because of your own little legalistic self-efforts of obedience. That is spitting

in God's face. You will not receive any salvation paycheck from God for your man-made acts of surrender, commitment or obedience. God has already cashed the check for salvation when He left His Son die upon the cross.

If you don't like that, then you won't like what comes next:

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

Did you catch what the Bible is saying? Perfect righteousness is imputed or transferred (“counted”) to our spiritual account in life when we decide to stop working, obeying, committing, surrendering or following the Lord. *Salvation is actually given to a person who does not work (“But to him that worketh not”).* Salvation is given and guaranteed to the person who does not work. He does not trust or depend upon anything that he does. It is faith in the provision of God's grace that brings salvation into our lives. It is grace plus nothing!

If a sinner cannot work and does not work, what can he do? He can believe! He can place faith alone in Jesus to save his soul. A person's “faith is counted for righteousness.” How much clearer can Paul make it? If you want the perfect saving righteousness of God to be placed upon your spiritual bank account, then you must have faith in Christ alone to save you. This is the message of grace through faith. Yes, it is all of grace.

“Grace, grace, Gods grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all my sin.”

As Lordship teachers promote their obedience\works type of salvation, they really lose sight of the unconditional love of God as presented in the promise of the Scriptures:

Romans 5:8

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Much of the church has lost sight of the unconditional love of God! God is waiting to embrace lost hell-bound sinners without any price or commitment to Him. He saves them unconditionally and keeps them saved unconditionally (“without price”). God's love embraces lost sinners unconditionally. This truth about the unconditional nature of God's love is also directed to every child of God today.

Romans 8:38-39 says:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I am so very thankful that God loves me as His child unconditionally. I am so very thankful that I do not have to wonder if God loves me and accepts me as His son. I know that God will love me forever and keep me saved forever because He has promised to save me **freely** by His own grace.

Imagine if you will this conversation between a son and father:

Son: “Dad, are you sure I really am your own son?”

Father: “Well young man, it depends on how you behave. If you really are my son, you will show me by the way that you obey my commands.”

Son: “But dad, what if I disobey you a lot?”

Father: “Well then, you have every reason to doubt that you are my son.”

Friend, this is a rather silly conversation. Yet many people feel that God the Father deals with them in such a way as this. Let us remember that a true child of God, who has trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior, is always seen to be a son (Galatians 4:6-7). When we are born into the family of God we cannot be unborn (John 3:5-7)! How silly to reason that we can be unborn and then reborn again at a later time. You cannot be unborn in the physical realm! My spiritual birth like my physical birth is irreversible.

But what about the man who said to me one day after a church service, “You cannot lose your salvation, but you can give it back or forfeit it?” This kind of reasoning is ridiculous. One cannot reverse their physical birth nor can he give his physical birth back to his parents! Jesus taught physical truths to clearly explain spiritual realities. The problem is that man is too “intellectually ignorant” or “reformed” to see the simplicity of what Jesus is saying! We become the sons of God as a result of God’s love being lavished upon our lives and we remain a son forever. And we never lose our sonship.

1 John 3:1

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

John W. Peterson has written:

“It took a miracle to put the stars in space,
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.”

Salvation through the grace of God is an undeserved and amazing miracle. Leave it at that! Don't add any commitments or requirements to it. Just leave the grace of God alone! Don't try and change the picture of God's grace. Keep grace just as it is - amazing grace.

I have a salvation and Gospel message that is absolutely free. **I do not have to wonder how much of a disciple I must become in order to be a real Christian. I do not have to worry about what level of commitment I am at in life in order to be sure of my salvation. I do not have to take a yardstick and measure how well I have been following Christ in order to determine my salvation.** I do not have to promise Christ a certain amount of surrender in order to escape hell. *Jesus has offered the wine and the milk of salvation absolutely free.* Go ahead. Come and take it without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1).

Today I can say from the perspective of my salvation that I have been rescued from the bondage of fearful condemnation, and I am free, praise the Lord, free at last! Can you truthfully say this? Some of you are under the bondage of rules, commitment and surrender. And you truly believe and feel that God will not accept you unless you live a certain way and surrender your life enough. But dear friend, what is enough? Nobody knows and neither do you. If salvation is based upon human effort then it becomes a worry and weight to your life. I invite you to come to the salvation, which Christ freely offers without price!

D.L. Moody used to say concerning salvation:

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

And I want to say that it is free all the way! It is free your entire Christian life. Bringing yourself under Galatian bondage will cause you to lose sight of the message about the free grace of God (Galatians 1:6). And when you lose sight of the glorious Gospel of grace, then you have “fallen from grace” in the truest sense (Galatians 5:1-4). The Gospel message of God's grace needs to be presented for what it really is. It is absolutely free without any obligation of any kind. Discipleship does not enter into the picture of God's grace. Man needs to get out of the way of God and let God do His wonderful saving miracle.

Revelation 22:17 says:

“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**.”

Some of the code words that have been derived out of this Lordship Salvation system are rather cutting. One of them that I want to deal with right now is that familiar saying called “**cheap grace**.” This coined saying implies that if a person can believe in the offer of salvation without any works or life of commitment attached to it, then this in some way cheapens God’s grace. If a person is not required to *do something* for his salvation or promises to live a certain way, then God’s grace, as seen in the death of Jesus, becomes cheapened or of no value. This kind of reasoning is actually the opposite of what the Bible says. *The Bible concludes that if God’s grace must be joined to a system of man-made endeavors in order to bring and assure salvation, then His death becomes cheap or of no value.*

Galatians 2:21 says:

“I do not frustrate (violate) the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

That is cheap grace! *If Jesus died upon the cross expressing the grace of God to a world lost in sin, while at the same time mankind is still required to do something in order to be saved, then grace becomes of no value.* If man can do something to save his own soul alongside of the bleeding and dying Lamb of God, then Jesus died in vain and the grace of God is cheap. However, the lordship advocates reverse the truth around and make it into a rather blasphemous code word of their own system of thought. They claim that God’s grace is cheap when a man is not required to do anything to bring salvation into his life. Well, they have it all wrong. **The very fact that man cannot do anything to save his soul and need not do anything to save his soul is the real picture of God’s grace.**

Zane Hodges has written:

“Instead of bowing before the immense generosity of God, they slander this offer as an expression of cheap grace and easy believism.”

Dear friend, God’s grace is not cheap. It cost the Son of God greatly. He bled and died upon a tree that we might be eternally ransomed. Peter says that the blood that was shed on the cross of Christ was priceless.

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, valuable) blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Dear friend, it 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.”

Some people touring a mint where coins are made were ushered into the smelting area. As they stood before the caldrons filled with molten metal, the tour guide told them that if a person were to dip his hand into water and then have someone pour the hot liquid over his hand, he would neither be injured nor feel any pain. Then, picking out one couple, he suggested that perhaps they would like to prove the truthfulness of what he had just said. The husband quickly replied, "No, thank you, I'll take your word for it."

But his wife responded eagerly by saying, "Sure, I'll give it a try!" Matching action to her words, she thrust her hand into a bucket of water and then held it out as the molten metal was poured over it. The hot liquid rolled off harmlessly just as the guide had said it would. The host turned to the husband and remarked, "Sir, you claimed to believe or have faith in what I said. But your wife truly had faith in what I said."

Faith is the key to receiving the grace of God upon your life. Faith is the channel that brings salvation into your life. But what does faith really mean? This brings us to our next area of study.

4. There is the confusion about faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

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

The Bible clearly reveals in unmistakable terms that an individual is saved through simple faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other requirement in order for salvation to come into a person's life. The word faith (“pistis”) simply means “conviction and persuasion that leads to trust or reliance.” Faith is a matter of belief or trust in Jesus Christ and His finished work upon the cross. The Lordship Salvation writers always include obedience in the matter of faith. They claim that obedience is an underlying part of faith. Their reasoning goes like this. Since works do follow faith, then saving faith must involve the idea of works or obedience. Therefore, the idea of faith always

has the understanding of obedience attached to it. And in presenting the Gospel, which demands faith, you also must speak of obedience and commitment, since this is part of faith. This reasoning is faulty and simply is not true. It distorts the true meaning of faith and tries to change the simple nature of faith, which is simply reliance upon another person.

Alva McClain used to say:

“Faith is the hand of the heart reaching out to God.”

After a detailed discussion of the meaning of the Greek word for faith, Hodge, the well-known Princeton theologian, concluded: “That faith, therefore, which is connected with salvation, includes knowledge, that is, a perception of the truth and its qualities, assent, or the persuasion of the truth of the object of faith; and trust, or reliance. The exercise, or state of mind expressed by the word faith, as used in the Scriptures, is not mere assent, or mere trust, it is the intelligent perception, reception, and reliance on the truth, as revealed in the gospel.”

Cocoris also writes:

“The synonyms for “faith” in the New Testament cannot mean “commit.” For example, in John 4:14 Jesus said, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” Later, Jesus said, “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life” (Jn. 6:54). Obviously, these statements suggest “appropriation” not commitment. The same thing is true of the idea of “looking” implied by John 3:14–15 (cf. Num. 21:6–9).”

About this, Hogan has written, “In ‘looking,’ there is no idea of committal to life, no thought of healing being deserved, no question concerning the subsequent life of the looker, no possibility of surrender to the object of vision.”

These are excellent observations that we will mention again in this paper. For now, we must understand that faith never includes the idea of surrender or obedience. The Biblical view of faith is simple trust and reliance upon Jesus Christ. Faith is opposed to works in every way. You cannot link works with the idea of saving faith. Works are diametrically opposed to faith in every way.

When a person believes on Christ for salvation, he places his complete trust, reliance or confidence in Christ alone to remove his sin, give him eternal life and save him from an eternal hell. As we continue in our study of the Lordship Salvation controversy which man has created, we discover that the whole matter about saving faith is misunderstood. It is very sad that these teachers misunderstand such an easy concept called faith. Even a child can understand what real faith is. **We must allow faith to be just one thing – faith!** *The teachers of Lordship Salvation claim that faith is intertwined with the works of man.* When it comes to salvation, faith also has the idea

of surrender, submission and discipleship attached to it. Also, faith is tied together with the journey of the Christian life and is seen to be a *working faith or works-type of faith*.

John MacArthur has said:

“Faith cannot be divorced from commitment; and “The call of the gospel is to trust Him (John 5:39-40). That necessarily involves some degree of love, allegiance, and surrender to His authority.”

He also wrote in the first edition of the Gospel According to Jesus:

“True faith is humble, submissive obedience;” and “...faith encompasses obedience. Faith is not complete unless it is obedient.”

But in the revised and expanded edition he toned down what he had said after much criticism: “True faith produces a heart that is humble, submissive, and obedient.”

J. Gresham Machen said:

“The faith that Paul means when he speaks of justification by faith alone is a faith that works.”

Bailey Smith wrote a book entitled “The Grace escape: Jesus as Lord” and said in this book: “...saving faith is not mere intellectual assent, but it involves an act of submission on our part.”

Marc Mueller said:

“Faith is synonymous with obedience.”

Lordship Salvation teachers stress that faith cannot be separated from works when it comes to a person's salvation, Christian life, and assurance of salvation. Therefore, at the time of salvation, every believing sinner must also possess a faith that is full of surrender to God and a commitment to live the Christian life. They must promise to live a holy life all of their days on earth and strive to surrender and be submissive in order to have the assurance that that they are a child of God. Some writers try to squeeze the two separate concepts of faith and surrender together and try to indicate that surrender is not a work.

John MacArthur has said:

“Jesus as Lord is no more a meritorious human work than believing on Him as Savior. Neither act is a good deed done to earn favor with God.”

This is simply an attempt to try and fuse together faith and works and make them synonymous. An honest evaluation will tell you that there is no difference between works and submission or obedience? *They are all designed to perform for God in some measure so as to please Him. And when we attempt to please God by the way we live*

in addition to having faith in Him for salvation, then it becomes a work on our part. And this is what the Lordship Salvation teacher's stress. In addition to faith or belief, we must do something in order to have genuine salvation. Works are works no matter what name you give to them – commitment, surrender, sacrifice or forsaking. These different words are simply trying to mask or hide the whole idea of works. Once again we must understand the heavy emphasis that the advocates of this view place on human achievement, works or holiness as a determining and assuring factor of salvation. *One must understand that a believer is saved and remains saved by grace through faith plus nothing.* Furthermore, an individual who has responded in faith to Christ can have the assurance of his salvation through the promises of the Word of God and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit to those promises.

We know that Roman Catholics teach that we are saved by faith plus works. Lordship Salvation teaches that we are saved by faith that works. But do not both definitions include works as a condition necessary for faith to be valid or for faith to be effectual? Either way, works are a necessary condition for eternal life. In Lordship Salvation, you must promise God that you will perform in a certain manner the rest of your life when you come to Him to be saved. You must give to God something else other than your simple childlike faith.

The difference between Rome and the Reformation can be seen in these simple formulas:

R. C. Sproul made this bizarre observation:

Roman view

faith + works = justification

Protestant view

faith = justification + works

I must submit that anyone with a basic knowledge of logic can easily demonstrate that these two end up in the same place! This is nothing more than a word game! But Sproul goes on to say: "Neither view eliminates works. The Protestant view eliminates human merit. It recognizes that though works are the evidence or fruit of true faith they add or contribute nothing to the meritorious basis of our redemption. The current debate over 'Lordship/salvation' must be careful to protect two borders. On the one hand it is important to stress that true faith yields true fruit; on the other hand it is vital to stress that the only merit that saves us is the merit of Christ received by faith alone."

Despite of what Sproul says, these two formulas lead in the same direction. Calvinistic Theology is leading to Catholic theology. Could this be why Roman Catholicism with its Catholic soteriology is beginning to unite with Protestantism? Many were shocked when some Classic Calvinists such as J. I. Packer signed what is really a peace treaty

with Roman Catholicism. Could it be that the lines of Catholic salvation and Calvinistic salvation are blending together? We live in a day when the Gospel is no longer being presented in a free manner. Instead of coming out of Roman Doctrine we are headed back to Romanish salvation.

Earl Radmacher, President Emeritus of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, wrote: Finally, as Paul felt the strong need to warn the elders of Ephesus concerning distorted teachings from among the brethren, we have as great a need today. *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.”

An article reported in Moody Monthly back in 1993 was interesting. The article was talking about the findings of George Barna who surveyed churchgoing people and asked them if they knew how to be saved and have the assurance of eternal life through the simple Gospel message. George Barna had this to say after his survey:

“There is plenty of reason for churches to worry if nearly one-half (48%) of their people who believe in evangelism also believe in salvation by works ... The central message of Protestantism is in salvation by faith alone in Christ, yet many Protestant evangelizers seem to be preaching a different message.”

The Catholic writer Fr. R. Creighton-Jobe said:

“Eternal life is at once the free gift of God and something which we must earn for ourselves.”

Then John MacArthur comes along and says:

“It (salvation) is free but it costs us everything.”

MacArthur argues that Calvinistic salvation and assurance is altogether different than Roman Catholic assurance: “Once again, the modern lordship controversy touches an issue that was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church denied - and denies to this day - that anyone on earth can have assurance of salvation. Because Catholic theology sees salvation as a joint effort between God and the sinner, the outcome must be in doubt right up to the end. If a person fails spiritually before salvation is complete, that person forfeits eternal life. Since no one can know with certainty whether he or she will have the strength to endure to the end, no one can really be certain of heaven.”

MacArthur’s reasoning is that God produces the works in the elect to make their faith real and therefore they are not man’s works. Furthermore, since every believer is

elected God will see to it that they persevere in these good works and holiness to verify their faith. Thus, according to MacArthur works do not enter into the picture as being necessary for salvation. But is this really solid reasoning? Are not works still works in the believer's life no matter what? And just because God gives us the power to do the works does that mean that they are not to be viewed as part of one's salvation? This line of reasoning is faulty and really borders on the same line of heresy as Roman Catholic teaching that works are needed with faith.

Roman view

faith + works = justification

Protestant view

faith = justification + works

I must wonder if Sproul really believes what he says in this mathematical equation. He says that faith alone saves but then he links works as a confirmation sign of this salvation. In doing this, he begins the "experimental salvation" technique that one must look for fruit in order to be saved and know that he is saved. This is why Sproul is "careful to protect two borders," as he says. In his Reformed way of thinking, he invariably links or ties works with saving faith as a necessary ingredient of saving faith in order for that faith to be genuine. ***If a certain "unknown amount" of works is not present in your life during your experimental journey to determine if you have eternal life, then you cannot be sure that you have it or ever had it! But if you keep the faith and keep the works (the unknown amount of works) then you can come to the realization that you are a Christian and that you have the possible option (not sure option) of knowing that you have eternal life. This approach is nothing more than a faith mixed with works legalism.***

Remember what we said in the introduction about the Classical Calvinism or Reformed teaching:

Post-Reformation Calvinists are saying that faith alone in Christ alone saves but you must learn to obey God, live holy and surrender your whole life to God because this is part of your faith alone in Christ that saves you. They are saying that faith alone in Christ saves but that this faith cannot be divorced from your obedience and works – it is part of your faith alone in Christ alone. Therefore, in offering the Gospel to you, Lordship advocates want you to understand that you must become obedient to all that God tells you to do or else your faith alone in Christ alone will not be real faith. In short, they are saying that you must have faith in Christ and faith that your obedience and surrendered life will be good enough to verify that you have faith in Christ alone. This is nothing more than a strange mixture of legalism, as we will see in our study.

Let's do Sproul's arithmetic game. I wonder what kind of grades he received in arithmetic? In the first equation, faith alone does not lead to salvation, works must be added to faith. But in the second equation, once again faith alone does not lead to justification. If an undetermined amount of works do not follow, then there was no real faith. Saving faith must include works in order to be real faith. This reasoning may sound logical but it is faulty in view of what the Scripture says. In the first place, faith is not mixed works in any way. Saving faith is opposite to works (Romans 4:1-6; Ephesians 2:8-9).

In the second place, works *follow* faith to authenticate it; they do not become part of faith (James 4:14-26). Thirdly, Reformed theologians who are teaching Lordship Salvation are really presenting the Gospel in a works fashion by insisting that man must surrender his life by giving up all of his sins and placing himself under the Lordship of Christ. He must promise to obey God all the days of his life and give up every sin that has been ruling his heart and life. Then he must go on and strive to live this way in order for his faith to be real or genuine. The Arminian says that when you do not live, as you should, then you lose your salvation. The Calvinist says that when you do not live as you should, then you never had it in the first place! No matter which way you cut the pie, Arminian or Calvinism, works are still part of faith. If you don't have works then you don't have saving faith!

Reformed Theology is forced to make the distinction between meritorious works and non-meritorious works. They claim that the works, which result in salvation (meritorious works), are different than the works that result from salvation (non-meritorious works). This sounds convincing but their reasoning is this. When the works of submission and obedience are part of true saving faith, then these are non-meritorious works. We must remember that Lordship Salvation teacher's stress that when presenting the Gospel to people we must speak to them about obedience, the forsaking of sin and total commitment to Christ. They press the works issue in order to be sure that the one who has faith will have a faith that works or performs in a certain manner. Therefore, even in the presentation of the Gospel message the Lordship Salvation teacher must speak about works (non-meritorious works) so that the individual who responds in faith will also respond with *non-meritorious* works in that they promise to obey God and commit their life to God and rid their life of every sin.

Gerstner makes the works distinction when he says:

"..virtually all dispensationalists, do not see this elementary distinction between non-meritorious 'requirements,' 'conditions,' 'necessary obligation,' indispensable duties,' and 'musts,' as the natural outworking of true faith, in distinction from faith in the Savior plus meritorious works as the very basis for salvation."

MacArthur makes the works distinction when he says:

“Meritorious works have nothing to do with faith. But faith works have everything to do with it...faith that does not produce works is dead faith, inefficacious faith. Faith that remains idle is no better than the faith the demons display.”

Again, on the same page:

“The believer himself contributes nothing meritorious to the saving process”

Once again, we see that salvation is a process in the Reformed way of thinking where one’s faith (hopefully saving faith – but who knows for sure) will be proven by good works. Works must be intertwined with faith, that is to say, non-meritorious works. This sounds like theological double talk because it is. **Lordship Salvation Calvinism seeks to weld together works with saving faith. That is why they preach the Gospel to the lost sinner and tell him to obey God at the same time. They claim that the Gospel includes works as part of saving faith. But their claim is that when you tell someone to obey God and follow him that this is only non-meritorious works that will be part of saving faith but not become meritorious works which result in salvation.** Lord deliver all of us from such a mixed up and confusing teaching as this! Works are always works no matter how you tie them to saving faith.

Have we forgotten the simplicity of the beloved verse of John 3:16:

“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.”

John 5:24 says:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

Yes it is true! All the promises that Jesus gives to you are true. Tarry at a promise and God will meet you there!

Bob Wilkin said:

“The promises of God are sufficient for assurance. While one’s works can have a confirmatory value, they are not essential for assurance. Any believer can have 100% certainty of his salvation if he but looks to the promises in God’s Word to the believer. One can have firm assurance of salvation and yet walk in sin. Sin, while a grievous thing, does not necessarily weaken assurance. Only if sin results in a person taking his eyes off God’s promises can sin weaken assurance.”

John Walvoord wrote in Bib Sac:

“Much of the confusion that exists in the matter of assurance of salvation may be traced to a failure to rest in the written promises of the Word of God. Those who tend to introspection, to examination of feelings, and are unwilling to take the promises of God at their face value have a corresponding loss in their experience of assurance of salvation. Just as assurance rests upon God’s promise, so lack of assurance inevitably stems from a failure in this area. Ultimately the question is not what a person feels, but what the Word of God states.”

Jesus said that if a person will believe on Him or place his faith in Him alone for salvation, then he is promised the blessing of everlasting spiritual life within his spirit. This is life that will never end or be taken away from the child of God because it is eternal or everlasting in existence. Because of this, Jesus promises that we “shall not come into condemnation”. Oh what good news that is.

We used to sing in a traveling music group: “Good news, good news, good news, good news! The Lord has saved my soul and that’s good news!”

Well, good news comes from a far country. Jesus will give to you eternal life through simple faith in Him. Jesus says that if you will just place your childlike faith in My own person, I will give you everlasting life. You can have this assurance that I will give it to you throughout your journey in life.

Lordship teachers press the issue of *performance* as a determining factor of a person’s real standing and salvation before God. However, Jesus presses the issue of faith or *belief* as the determining factor for eternal life and the assurance of a person’s salvation. Life becomes like an endless quest for salvation and assurance, when we depend upon the level of our performance as the barometer for salvation. The level of our holiness, commitment and surrender to God should not become the determining factor that we are saved.

Facts need to give way to our changing feelings and performance. Why is this? Because we all have a bad report card at times in life. What happens when we get a C, D or F on the report card? If our salvation and the assurance of that salvation depended upon our works or manner of living, we would never have the assurance that we can have in Christ alone. Faith in Christ, and not our report card, is what brings salvation and its assurance into our lives and hearts. Faith in Christ at the time of salvation and throughout our Christian journey assures us of the salvation that only He can provide. It is faith in Christ that brings the peaceful rest of salvation to our soul.

Hebrews 4:9-11 says:

“There remaineth therefore a rest (salvation’s rest) to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let

us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

We can have the assurance and peace that we are saved and that God accepts us only as we place all of our trust and faith in Christ alone for our salvation. God has accepted me! What a peace and assurance we can have. Dear reader, do you have this assurance and rest concerning your salvation? **It is faith alone in Christ alone!** How simple! How wonderful! How reassuring and full of hope we can be!

Acts 16:31

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

John 6:29 says:

“Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

Many Jews came to Christ during His earthly ministry with their Pharasaical background or baggage that they had been taught by these legalists. Many people wondered what kind of works (plural) they could do to please God.

John 6:28

“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works (plural) of God?”

After their question Jesus answers them by starting with the same word that the people emphasized – works. However, Jesus does not make this word plural. He makes it singular - work. “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work (singular) of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” In essence, Jesus was saying, “You want to talk about works. That’s how you are conditioned to think. Okay, there is only one work that you can do and that is to believe on Me for your salvation.” This does not mean that Jesus was saying that faith involved works of any kind. *Rather, Jesus was saying that this is the only thing that God requires of you.* God requires each one of you to have faith and not works. There is only one thing that God requires and that is faith. Thus, faith is contrasted to works once again.

We see that Jesus expresses the truth that belief is a singular act or decision of faith in Christ for salvation. When a person believes on Christ for salvation he is immediately and instantaneously saved or delivered from the penalty of sin. His salvation from the penalty of sin is not a process that he must somehow feel his way through. Salvation is a matter of personal belief in Christ.

Reformed writers always stress that belief for salvation is more than just mental assent or acknowledgment to God that you are a sinner and in need of salvation. This is true. ***Biblical belief involves the need to turn your eternal destiny over to the work and provision of Christ. It is a personal response to Christ whereby you transfer all of your dependency and trust in Jesus Christ to save you.*** Belief that brings salvation into your life is not merely a mental compliance to some facts. It involves absolute total reliance upon the person and work of Christ to save your soul.

The truth stated in these verses (Acts 16:31; John 6:29) is that salvation always follows a definite act of faith or belief in Christ. The tense of the word “believe” speaks about a definite act of faith in Christ for salvation. Belief does involve a personal decision in Christ. It is not some kind of continual faith journey that breeds uncertainty and doubt about when and if you are saved. Many people today seem to have difficulty understanding what it means to believe on Christ. However, when a sinner realizes he is lost, helpless, hopeless, hell-bound, and when he is told to believe on Christ in order to allow Him to become his Savior, he knows exactly what it means. It is the only thing left that he *can* do!

Lewis Sperry Chafer used to say:

“I will go throughout eternity saying, I only trusted Christ.”

Lordship Salvation teachers place a heavy emphasis upon a person’s life and works as a determining factor of his salvation and acceptance before God. Simple trust in Christ alone for salvation becomes blurred and misunderstood. Why on earth must we be so foggy about what the Bible clearly teaches? The clearest noonday truth in all of the Word of God is that God’s grace and salvation are freely given to the believing sinner through his simple faith or trust in Jesus Christ.

We must remember that it is the obedience of Jesus Christ that saves us and not our obedience to Him.

Romans 5:19 says:

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

Philippians 2:8 also says:

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

We are recipients of the work that Jesus Christ has done for us. Jesus obeyed the Father’s will and died upon the cross. And because of His obedience to the Father’s plan we can be saved today. The only command for an unbeliever to obey is the command to believe the Gospel message about Christ. This is all that God requires of the lost sinner. How wonderful this is to grasp and realize.

The heart of the issue gets down to the meaning of faith. **Lordship teachers are forced to re-define faith and make it say something more than God wanted it to say.** The teacher of Lordship Salvation concludes that there must be some hidden, suppressed condition in the matter of faith. If this condition were expressed, it would make the meaning of faith different from what it appears. In coming to this conclusion the teacher actually warps the meaning of the word faith.

MacArthur says:

“The gospel call to faith presupposes that sinners must repent of their sin and yield to Christ’s authority. That, in a sentence, is what lordship salvation teaches.”

The teaching of Lordship Salvation says that a person’s faith at the time of salvation and throughout his Christian life must have the element of works attached to it. Faith does not only mean simple trust or reliance upon God. It also means to possess a willingness to obey and submit to God’s authority over our lives. Faith, according to these thinkers, must include the ideal of surrender and commitment in order for it to be genuine faith that saves. And this commitment will ultimately be manifested in the true believer’s life throughout his entire days upon earth. Thus, the faith that saves or leads to salvation is a working faith revealed in a life of commitment and surrender.

MacArthur wrote:

“That is, after all, the heart of the gospel according to Jesus. The apostles knew this truth both from the Lord’s teaching and from their own experience. It was the heart of their message to an unsaved world. They preached that faith *works*; it cannot fail or remain passive, but immediately goes to work in the life of the believer. It works *for us* and *in us* and *through us*. Faith is sustained and it sustains us in the midst of life’s trials. It motivates us in the face of life’s difficulties. It carries us through life’s tragedies. Because faith works, it enables us to enjoy a supernatural spiritual rest.”

Does faith stand alone without the idea of works attached to it? Does faith involve any kind of commitment, particularly the commitment of the years of one’s life while living on earth? The answer to this question is very easy to answer. *Faith and works are two distinct teachings in the Bible.* Faith is actually contrasted to works as a way of salvation and acceptance before God.

Ephesians 2:8-9

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

As we have noted in our last point, God saves us by His grace as seen in the person and work of His Son. However, *the way that we receive God’s grace is the faith way.* This is the way that is contrasted to works. Therefore, faith has nothing to do with

works at all. There can be no works of man involved with true saving faith. *Faith is the channel or pipeline that brings God's saving grace into our lives. The means or vehicle by which God's grace is transferred into a person's life is through simple faith.* Faith is not some kind of works\faith that we must prove to God so that we can be sure that we are saved. Also, the Bible does not say that we are saved by faith. It says that we are saved "through faith." This simply means that faith in Christ is the channel through which the saving grace of God is transferred into our lives.

We may say that we have put out the fire with the hose. Well, we really did not put the fire out with the hose. What we really mean is that we used the hose to channel the water to the fire so that we could extinguish the flames. The hose was the instrument that we used to put the fire out but the water is what really did the work. Likewise, our faith in Christ is the hose that brings the grace of Christ into our lives. Faith is what brings down the water of eternal life into our spirit so that we "shall never thirst again" (John 4:14).

Baptism, church attendance, wine, bread, holiness, discipleship, surrender or commitment is all opposed to the faith way. *Many people are filling up the pipeline to receive God's grace with all of these church acts and ordinances. Instead of faith in Christ, they substitute faith in something else.* However, when a person places faith in these methods for his salvation (acceptance before God) and his assurance of salvation, these enemies to faith disillusion him. The individual who places faith in these acts cannot place faith in the Son of God for salvation at the same time. The two are opposed to each other. You can't have faith in Christ and faith in your works at the same time.

Where is your faith resting today? *If your faith is mistaken or misplaced; it will be a costly and eternal error for your soul!* If your faith is not resting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, then you may be on the brink of judgment. Hell may be around the corner for you.

The hymnwriter said:

"My faith has found a resting place,
Not in device nor creed.
I trust the Ever-living One,
His wounds for me shall plead.

Enough for me that Jesus saves,
This ends my fear and doubt.
A sinful soul I come to Him,
He'll never cast me out.

I need no other argument,
I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that he died for me.”

As we have noted in Ephesians 2:8-9, works and faith is contrasted. There is no thought of obedience attached to the faculty of faith. *Faith is not what saves us. It is God's grace that saves us through the vehicle of faith (“through faith”).* The text does not say “because of faith.” In other words, our faith is not meritorious in any way. Faith is not a work at all. Hyper Calvinists argue how the act of believing is a work which man cannot do. They claim that if God does not believe for a person, then it becomes a work for that person, some kind of bribe to God. This is the dream of the Calvinist and is total nonsense. In addition, Lordship writers try to mix faith with obedience as a part of salvation and the measuring stick for the assurance of one's salvation. They attempt this in order to prove their faulty logic of discipleship/mastery salvation. *Faith and works are contrasted in the Bible, and the two are not the same. **Faith is not a work; it is ceasing from work.***

Faith is the key that opens the door to Heaven. You may have a key ring with a lot of keys on it. Many times they will look somewhat alike. But I'll tell you this. If you go to the front door of my house, you could try all of those keys and none of them would open the door. Only the correct key on my own personal key ring would open the door. Do you get the point? There is only one key that opens the door to God's saving grace. It is called faith. That is what will open the door to your personal salvation. There is nothing else in the world that will open up the door to allow the floods of divine grace to come into your life. Only faith will unlock the door of salvation.

Galatians 3:11 says:

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.*”

Romans 3:28 says:

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

These statements of the Bible will tell us that God is looking for a person's faith when it comes to his justified or legal standing before God. God is asking us to believe on His Son and His Son alone. Any individual salvation before God is solely based upon a person's faith in Christ. There can be no mistake about it. God does not say He is looking for our surrender and commitment as a way of salvation. He is looking for faith plus nothing. ***You must allow faith to be just one thing – faith.***

William Pettingill always said:
“By grace through faith plus nothing.”

Hebrews 11:1 says:
“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Did you catch this definition or description of what faith really is? *Faith is something which finds its support (“substance”) in those things, which are not seen!* Works are those things that are seen and evidenced in the life. The Lordship Salvation teacher will say that faith itself is tied together with works and must be evidenced by a life of commitment and obedience. But true biblical faith does not rest in obedience or any acts that can be outwardly seen. Faith rests in the substance or foundational promises of Scripture. These unchanging promises are the foundation of true faith. *Faith must have some revelation or promise from God to stand upon.* **Faith is not a leap in the dark and lonesome path of searching for works and holiness of life in order to know that you have true faith and real salvation.** Faith rests in the “evidence” or conviction of the promises of God’s Word about eternal life. Although we cannot see these promises as we can see works or holiness in our lives, we can still have faith in these unseen spiritual realities. **Lordship Salvation teachers who are Reformed in their thinking are saying that “seeing is believing” but real faith says, “believing is seeing.”**

We might add that the only thing that God wants us to commit to Him at the time of our salvation is our own soul and eternal destiny. God is not looking for the years of our life. He is looking for poor lost and helpless souls.

2 Timothy 1:12 says:
“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.”

A sinner is saved because he believes in a Person - Jesus Christ the Savior (“I know whom I have believed”). Paul does not say, “I know that I have surrendered” or “I know that I am a disciple.” *Salvation is in a person and promised to us on the basis of a person.* Salvation is not based upon our performance or our ability to be a faithful disciple. The word “keep” means to guard and keep safe. Behind the imagery of the word is the thought of banking. The idea of deposit is attached to this word. When you deposit something, it is kept safe and secure. *Paul had deposited the message of the Gospel and his own soul in the care and keeping of the Savior (“that which I have committed”).* Paul was also sure (“persuaded”) that Jesus Christ would faithfully guard that deposit throughout his own lifetime and eternity. Both his soul and ministry of the Gospel would be safely guarded by the keeping power of God. He was sure of it.

Charles Spurgeon was sure of his salvation. C. H. Spurgeon is quoted as saying that he was so sure of his salvation that he could “grab on to a cornstalk and swing out over the fires of hell, look into the face of the devil, and sing, Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!”

Are you sure? Are you “persuaded” like Paul was! You can be fully convinced that you are saved from hell for time and eternity. Your faith can be resting completely upon the person of Jesus Christ (“I know whom I have believed”). *The finger of faith points you straight to Jesus Christ. The voice of faith bids you to look straight to Him. The heart of faith reaches out to Him.*

In an old book published by Loizeaux Brothers, The Evangelist T.T. Martin said: “I entwine my feeble, trembling faith around Thy cross, around Thyself, and if I die, I will die cleaving, clinging, looking unto Thee!”

There is no need to commit your lifetime to God. There is no need to make a commitment of obedience and discipleship when you come to Christ for salvation. *You can't keep all A's on the report card of your life anyway.* Forget about it. Jesus is looking for your soul. *Just commit your soul and place your entire eternal destiny into Christ's keeping and care.* Jesus will take care of you! He will keep you saved all the way. He is the only One who can.

“Be not dismayed what-e'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.
God will take care of you,
Thru every day, Oer all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.”

Lordship Salvation teaching does not promote the assurance of salvation in a person's life based upon Christ. *We must come to realize that Christ is the source of our certainty.* Lordship Salvation theology places assurance for salvation upon self-examination to see if one is living in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. Teachers of Lordship Salvation tend to ignore the person of Christ and shift their eyes to the performance of their lives as the key-determining factor for their salvation. *When a person does this he lives on the uncertainty principle. He can never be sure that he is living in a good enough manner for God to really accept him.* In doing this he creates a doctrine of doubt about salvation. **Many people are looking for assurance in the wrong place!** They are looking at their works and their personal accomplishments instead of Christ. This is the Reformed teaching being propagated today. One can only have assurance that they are Christ's when they look at their

works and holy living. Thus, Lordship Salvation teachers want to believe that they are Christ's by looking at their works. The problem is this. **You do not believe by looking at works; you believe by looking at Christ.**

2 Timothy 1:12 is worth repeating:

"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."

Sir James Simpson, the discoverer of Chloroform, was dying. A friend came to him and said, "Sir James, what are your speculations?" "Speculations, I do not have any speculations. 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."

Lordship salvation proponents often leave assurance out of their discussions of the Gospel. The reason for this is because they regard assurance as something that is not necessarily connected with saving faith. It is usually considered a fruit of faith and is to be gathered through self-examination.

James Montgomery Boice writes in his book, "Christ's call to discipleship,"

"It is necessary that we do these good works (as Christians in all ages have), for unless we do, we have no assurance that we are really Christ's followers."

Chantry similarly remarks,

"Only when God is loved supremely and the spirit of the law kept has a man any reason to believe that he has been truly born of God."

John MacArthur writes:

"The fruit of one's life reveals whether that person is a believer or an unbeliever. There is no middle ground."

John Murray clearly equated endurance with works or holiness and verifies that you cannot have assurance by this teaching. He's absolutely right. And this is because you are looking for assurance in the wrong place! Assurance is in a person – the person of Christ.

Murray says:

"In order to place the doctrine of perseverance in proper light we need to know what it is not. It does not mean that every one who professes faith in Christ and who is accepted as a believer in the fellowship of the saints is secure for eternity and may entertain the assurance of eternal salvation. Our Lord himself warned his followers in the days of his flesh when he said to those Jews who believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth

shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32). He set up a criterion by which true disciples might be distinguished, and that criterion is continuance in Jesus’ Word.”

He goes on to say:

“The doctrine of perseverance is the doctrine that believers *persevere*.... It is not at all that they will be saved irrespective of their perseverance or their continuance, but that they will assuredly persevere. Consequently the security that is theirs is inseparable from their perseverance. Is this not what Jesus said? “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.”

This is theological double talk! Murray is saying that perseverance does not save you but unless you persevere to some unknown degree, then you cannot be saved. Whenever a person shifts his eyes to their life instead of Christ as the determining factor for his salvation and acceptance before God, then he begins to doubt his salvation. This is why Paul says, “I know whom I have believed.” Salvation has nothing to do with what you do or how you live as a disciple. Salvation is all wrapped up in the person of Christ. When you come to realize this wonderful truth, you will be free from the fear of condemnation. You will be free in Christ. Rest in Him today. He is all of your salvation and all you will ever need for salvation and acceptance before the Father. **We must remember that the saving power does not reside in our faith but in the object of our faith which is Christ. When we begin to emphasize the quality of one’s faith we automatically begin to de-emphasize the object of one’s faith.**

Benjamin B. Warfield was right when he said:

“... the saving power resides exclusively, not in the act of faith, or the attitude of faith, or the nature of faith, but in the object of faith.”

The right kind of faith simply means that we are to have faith in the right object – Jesus Christ. It does not mean that we are to include surrender or obedience with our faith. Many Lordship Salvation teachers stress faith to the point that salvation seems to coincide with the person’s faith working properly instead of with the object of faith which is to be Christ and His finished work.

Lordship teachers try to stress several passages, which they claim teach obedience as a needed part of genuine faith. This obedience, according to them, is needed in order for a person to know that he is saved. According to their view, certain Bible passages stress that faith includes obedience, discipleship or wholehearted devotion.

Romans 1:5; & 16:26 says:

“By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith (“to obedience of faith”) among all nations, for his name.”

“But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

In these verses Paul is talking about faith as a system as opposed to works or law as a system. He is talking about faith as a method of divine dealing with mankind. *The obedience of faith as mentioned within this verse does not refer to an ongoing manner of obedience throughout a person's life.* In other words, Paul is not suggesting that a believer will obey Jesus Christ perfectly throughout his entire life. He is not suggesting that faith is more than faith. *Lordship teachers claim that Paul is teaching that works or obedience must continually follow true faith. Therefore, a believer can know that he is truly saved by the kind of life that he lives and how he obeys Christ.* After all, faith always includes the ideal of obedience.

This type of reasoning sounds very good, but is this what Paul really means by the “obedience of faith?” This would contradict what Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9. Here we discovered that salvation was by grace through faith alone, a faith that was contrasted to works or obedience of any kind. The expression “obedience of faith” to which Paul is referring is *actually talking about an obedient faith that believes in the Gospel or Christ for salvation.* **In other words, faith is simply an obedient response to the invitation of the Gospel. The individual who exercises faith must obey the message of the Gospel, which says a person, is to believe or have faith in Christ.** He is to reach out for the unconditional grace of God and trust in God's grace alone to bring salvation into his life.

This obedience is then pointing to an individual's obedient response to the free Gospel invitation at the time of salvation. It does not have anything to do with his obedience to the commands of living the Christian life or following the Lord Jesus. A person must obey the message of the Gospel by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). The same idea of a person having to obey the command to believe the Gospel is also brought out in several other passages.

Acts 6:7

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

This means that many Jewish priests obeyed God's command to believe the Gospel. Their obedience was not obedience to the Christian life or their promise to follow Christ all the days of their lives. Their obedience was to the free presentation of the Gospel message. They were obedient to the offer of salvation, which presented salvation to their lives through their response of simple faith in Christ. **In other words, these references in the Bible refer to faith as an act of obedience to God's command to believe the Gospel.**

Romans 1:5 and other related passages do not teach that saving faith always results in ongoing obedience. This places salvation and the assurance of salvation upon the performance of the individual. Rather, Romans 1:5 merely teaches that when a person trusts Christ for his salvation, he has obeyed God's command to place his faith in Christ alone for his salvation. Faith and obedience are linked together for this reason alone. **Belief is an act of obedience, but disbelief is an act of disobedience.** Paul also links this truth of obedience to the Gospel in Romans 15:18-20.

“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.”

Here we see that Paul equates the Gentiles obedience with the presentation of the Gospel message. **As seen already, “obedience” is a synonym for coming to Christ (faith) at the time of salvation (1:5, 16:26; Acts 6:7).** Many Gentiles would, out of their own obedience, believe on Christ for their salvation. They would obey the Gospel command to believe on Christ for their salvation and only hope for eternal life and Heaven (John 3:36). The expression “by word and deed” in this verse actually points to the “word” that the apostles shared about the Gospel and to the mighty “deeds” that they performed to verify their message and credentials as apostles. However, the lost Gentile people, with whom the apostles came in contact, needed to hear the clear presentation of the Gospel of salvation in Christ alone for salvation. It was these poor lost Gentile souls who needed to become obedient to the Gospel message by placing their faith alone in Christ alone for salvation.

Once again we see that the only obedience that is required for salvation is the obedience of simple faith in the Gospel message, which presents salvation as a free gift by the grace of God. There is no hint that faith involves the obedience of a person's life or his promise to present his whole life of obedience to the Lord.

An obedient faith is a believing faith, a faith that rests fully in Christ and His free offer of salvation.

This truth is also clearly presented in several other passages.

1 Peter 1:22 says:

“Seeing ye have purified (cleansed or purified) your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see *that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently.”

Here Peter reminds his readers that they were actually cleansed of all their sins through their obedience to the truth. What truth? The truth of the Gospel. These people were cleansed from all their sins only when they obeyed the Gospel message. The Gospel message requires that a person believes on the work of Christ alone for his salvation. When an individual is ready and willing to follow this glorious and grand truth and believe on the Son, only then is he saved. The only obedience that is required for salvation is the obedience of simple faith in the Gospel message.

1 Peter 2:7 says:

“Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.”

Peter implies that when a person believes the message of the Gospel that he is saved. However, when he refuses to believe the message of the Gospel he is disobedient to the only way that he can receive salvation. ***He is obedient to the way of faith in Christ.***

1 Peter 4:17

“For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?”

Once again disobedience is linked with the Gospel. There is a great company of people who have not obeyed the Gospel by refusing to do the only thing that the Gospel requires – believe! When a person chooses to not obey the Gospel they are refusing to believe and receive the only thing that can save them, which is the free offer of God’s grace. There is only one way to disobey the Gospel. It is to refuse to believe in the message of grace.

Romans 10:16

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

Paul says that there are many Jewish people who have not obeyed the Gospel message or the report about the Messiah and His substitutionary work on the cross. How did these people fail to obey the Gospel? They failed to obey the Gospel by disbelieving on Christ as their spiritual Messiah and Savior from hell.

Warren Wiersbe has said:

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

2 Thessalonians 1:8 says:

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When Jesus returns to judge the world, there will be many survivors of the tribulation period who have not obeyed the Gospel. Once again this means that these people have refused to obey the command to believe in the Gospel message which proclaims that Christ died for them, and He alone can bring salvation into their lives. We might say: **Belief is an act of obedience in the Gospel message, but disbelief is an act of disobedience in the Gospel message.**

This is brought out in Paul’s dealings with the Philippian jailer.

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.”

There are those who try to make something out of this idea of obeying the Gospel. They claim that this means we must live a certain way in order to win God’s favor and to be sure that we are saved. They teach that a person must, out of necessity, promise God he will live a pure life for Him and fulfill those promises to God throughout his days on earth. If he does not fulfill his obligations to God, then God will condemn him.

Now just stop and think for a moment. How can a person obey the Gospel other than by believing it? The Gospel is all about Christ and what He has done to save our souls. How does a person obey the message about the Gospel other than by believing in the very person (Christ) whom the Gospel is all about? *The Gospel is not about the obedience or the personal requirements of people. It is all about the person of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 reads:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

This is the Gospel message. The word Gospel means “good news” It is the good news that Christ has died and rose again to bring salvation into our lives. *The Gospel (good news) is what Christ has done for us and not what we can do for Him!*

Lewis Sperry Chafer used to say two things in connection with the Gospel message. He would share these two important details with his students, who were going into the ministry. “Men, preach an accurate Gospel. And men, give them something to believe.”

Lordship teachers think that it is good news that we can “hang on” until the end of our lives and try to submit to Christ in order to know that we are saved. Dear friend, that is bad news and not good news. If our salvation and the assurance of that salvation depended upon our performance, we would all be going to hell. That’s bad news. I am banking my soul upon the good news, the good news that Christ died for me, was buried and rose again in order to bring eternal salvation into my life.

It is this “good news” or message that we must obey through simple belief in Christ and what He has done for us. **Our belief at the time of salvation is obedience – the belief of obedience.** *We obey the Gospel by believing on His Son and what He has done for us. This is the true obedience of faith.*

The offer of salvation as seen in the Gospel can bring the assurance of salvation to our heart for time and eternity. Christ died for me, bearing all of my sins and judgment. He became my personal sacrifice to forgive me of all my sins and save me from hell.

Hebrews 9:26 reminds us:

“For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Yes, Jesus died to put away our sin forever and give us eternal salvation and that eternal justified standing before the Father. He took care of both our Adamic “sin” and multitudes of “sins” that we would ever commit in our lives as He died as our substitute. There is complete salvation through the offer of the Gospel or that good news that Jesus died to forgive us of all sins and save us from an everlasting hell. This is the offer of salvation. The Gospel is offered to a man’s faith, and when it is believed, that person can have the complete assurance of salvation through Christ. Just think of this. **If you are not sure of your salvation, you do not believe the offer that God has made to you.**

John 6:40 says:

“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.”

Romans 10:13 says:

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

John 1:12

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name.”

Jesus said in John 4:14:

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

John 3:14-15

“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 should not perish, but have eternal life.”

In the above set of verses belief is likened to looking, even as the children of Israel looked up to the serpent on the pole in faith. All that the lost sinner must do is look in faith to Christ. Christ on the cross is the very One who bore our judgment even as the serpent of judgment represented to the nation of Israel. Faith is simply looking. Looking does not require any commitment or surrender. It is simply a look!

Isaiah 45:22 was the verse God used to bring Charles Spurgeon to faith in Christ:

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.”

John 6:53 also says:

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”

Jesus was the bread of life (John 6:48) that the people in a lost world needed to eat. Of course, Jesus was not speaking in a literal fashion. He was speaking figuratively concerning the matter of appropriating His own saving life to the lives of lost sinners. In this section of Scripture belief is likened to eating Christ. The message is clear. Belief involves personal appropriation of Christ’s work and life to your own lost condition. It involves a personal response and application of the saving work of Christ to your own life. Eating is a wonderful way to express what real faith is all about. It is taking Christ into your own life and allowing Him alone to save you and fulfill your life.

The free invitation of Revelation 22:17 says:

“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.”

All of the above verses use other words interchangeably with the word “belief.” Such words as “call,” “receive,” “drink,” “eat,” “come,” “look” and “take” all speak of what is involved with simple faith. They are simply synonyms for faith. These words are simply other ways to express true saving faith, which involves a person’s simple trust in Christ for salvation apart from any type of commitment or promise of surrender. There is no idea of commitment of life or surrender in these words. Faith is trusting in Christ for eternal life. It is not committing ones’ life to Christ. All we must do is believe. This

means that you must call, receive, eat, drink, look, come or take what God is offering to us! How wonderfully simple His plan of salvation is!

There is nothing that signifies a person must promise to give up all his sins and surrender to Christ all the days of his life. There is nothing that suggests a person must promise to die to self and follow Christ the rest of his earthly days. There is nothing that insists that a poor lost sinner must promise to serve Christ all the days of his life and make Christ Master over every area of his life, all of his life. You cannot bargain with God. Salvation is absolutely free for the taking, free to receive and is only a call away. Just believe on Me Christ is saying. Just take salvation. Just receive it. Just drink. Just call upon Me. Just come unto Me.

Matthew 11:28

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

We must remember that salvation is the result of Christ coming down to us. It is not the result of us going up to Christ. Christ meets us and we do not meet Him.

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. In fact, the thief on the cross could not walk and aisle or raise a hand. Both his hands and feet were fastened to a cross! The thief could not be baptized. No, the cross would only float! Did the thief promise anything to Christ? No. Did Jesus demand anything of him? No. This is because salvation by grace through faith is without works of any kind. Salvation by grace means that there is hope for a dying man on a cross. There is hope for someone who can do absolutely nothing for himself! One man who was dying of cancer said that it would not be fair for God to forgive him of all his sins that he had done throughout all his life. Well, the thief on the cross tells us a different story. By the way, since when is grace ever fair? Grace is not fair because it gives to us what we don't deserve. By definition, grace is not fair. It is the unmerited favor of God toward unworthy sinners.

Now let's take this matter of a works\faith a step farther. All of us have seen in the news or read in the newspaper about how an airplane had gone off course or malfunctioned while in flight. The end result was that the airplane crashed. At the wreckage sight there is debris all over the ground. Parts and pieces of the airplane have been spread everywhere. Well, there are those today who are teaching that Christians will never crash in their journey through life. The Lordship teacher stresses that genuine believers may temporarily lapse in their walk, but never go off course and fully crash in their Christian lives. They will never live in defeated carnality within their lives. The Lordship teachers stress this in order to try and prove their teaching of the perseverance of the saints or their theory that believers will never really linger in disobedience. The dream that continual obedience will always follow faith or that

genuine believers or Christians will follow Christ and be fully committed to Christ all the days of their lives is just that – a dream! I am about to look at the lives of genuine believers who have crashed in their Christian lives.

1. Lot crashed – see Genesis 13:10-13; 14:12 19:1,14,16

Lot crashed in his life by moving toward Sodom, and eventually going into Sodom and becoming entrenched in its life and politics. Lot chose to live in Sodom, and could have avoided the filthy influence of the place. Some of his daughters were married within this wicked society. *You might say that Lot entered Sodom and then Sodom entered Lot.* He lacked good decision, character and fruit. He was a selfish man and at one time in his life he even offered his two virgin daughters to the men of Sodom in order to spare the two angelic guests (19:4-8). Lot lost his testimony to his own family, to his married daughters and to their husbands (see 19:14). He was hardly the testimony of a committed believer. And yet the New Testament declares that he was saved or justified in God's eyes.

2 Peter 2:7 says:

“And delivered just Lot, vexed (afflicted, troubled or tortured) with the filthy conversation of the wicked.”

Lot was just or righteous, as all saved or regenerated people are. This righteousness speaks of that righteousness which was imputed to him, by grace through faith, as it was to Abraham (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3). In Genesis 19, Lot hardly comes across as a godly Christian. Godliness was not a consistent mark in his daily conduct (Genesis 19:14). However, in his standing before God he was a justified man. Although Lot was not the perfect example of a committed Christian he was depressed by the exceedingly sinful conditions all around him. The word “vexed” implies that Lot was troubled deeply and tortured with the immoral, outrageous behavior of the people living in and around Sodom and Gomorrah. Tragically, it is becoming ordinary for believers today to no longer be shocked by the rampant sin in their society.

The point is this. When God saves a man, He keeps a man saved regardless of his testimony or lapse in his Christian life. Now think of this. If the requirements of complete obedience or surrender were applied to Lot, we would have to conclude that he was not saved. *From the standpoint of the Lordship Salvation teaching, we would have to conclude that Lot was never saved.* But God says He was saved or righteous in His eyes. In fact, God saved him from the fiery judgment by pulling him out of the city. So God eternally saves every believer who has placed genuine faith in His Son's sacrifice.

I think that you and I are going to get two big surprises when we get to Heaven. The number one surprise will be that there are not going to be some people in Heaven who

we were sure were going to make it. They really were not saved, although we thought they were. The second and bigger shock will be this: There are going to be some people in Heaven who we never even suspected were real born-again children of God. They didn't have very much of a testimony down here. Lot is an example of this. I don't think this man had much of a testimony for God at all and yet God saved him.

2. Saul crashed

Saul was anointed by the Lord as ruler over God's inheritance (1 Samuel 10:1, 24). He was initially a spiritual man directed by God (10:6-10; 11:6). Saul even built an altar unto God (14:35) and worshipped God (15:31). However, Saul did many wicked acts throughout his life such as taking the place of the priest and offering a sacrifice upon the altar (13:8-14). Saul also failed to utterly destroy all of the belongings and people connected with the Amalekites (15:19-35). Saul became disobedient and even lied to Samuel about what he had done. Because of his disobedience the Lord sent an evil spirit upon him and he tried to kill David (19:9-10). Saul actually ended up murdering

the priests of the Lord (22:17-18). He would also depart into wrong doing by actually going to a medium in order to talk to Samuel who had died (28:6-8). These are terrible and even horrible acts of sin. And yet Saul was a regenerate man who simply did not persevere in holiness. His life at times seemed very honorable to God, but he became very ungodly in his life. However, even during his times of ungodliness, there was a certain note of dependency upon God (28:1). Here was a regenerate man who lived a consistent carnal life. Furthermore, he persisted in carnality to the point of death (31:1-4). *This teaches that not all the saints persist or persevere in a life of good works up to the point of physical death. Carnality can be a real part of their lives.*

3. David crashed – see 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 27

David saw a beautiful woman bathing and decided to have physical relations with her. David failed miserably at this point of his life and God was not pleased with him. David did not persevere very well. He had a tremendous downfall in life. And yet David is found worshipping God and asking for forgiveness after his terrible sin (Psalms 51:1-12). David did not ask God to restore his salvation unto him but the joy of that salvation which he could have as a believer in the Lord. David crashed.

4. Solomon crashed

These chapters in the Bible describe the glory and dedication of Solomon to God. We see that Solomon loved the Lord (1 Kings 3:3). And yet, we discover that Solomon did not separate his life from the heathen people (1 Kings 1:1). One of the first things Solomon did after he became king was to marry a daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. His marriage formed an alliance with Egypt. Solomon's marriages with heathen women

were terrible mistakes and finally became his downfall. Solomon willingly offered to the heathen idols on what was called the “high place.” These were places of worship dedicated to the gods of the Canaanites. The altars were built upon the hilltops and other elevations. The pagan Canaanites felt that the closer they got to heaven, the more likely was the possibility that their prayers and offerings would reach their gods. Offering sacrifices at places other than the tabernacle was prohibited in the Law (Lev. 17:3-4). Nevertheless this practice was commonly observed in Israel at this time, even by Solomon.

I do not believe that Solomon ever had the same spiritual capacity for God that David had nor the longing for God in his life. Solomon did, however, recognize his sins. After he married Pharaoh’s daughter (and we only wish he had done this before), he went to the Lord and asked for wisdom. Solomon possesses childlike humility before God (1 Kings 3:7). He was dependent upon God and was said to possess a discernment between right and wrong after doing some of the things that he had done (3:6-14). We only wish that Solomon had possessed this same kind of discernment before he did some of the things that he did. Nonetheless, Solomon did have an intimacy and fellowship with God. His prayer of dedication for the temple was certainly God-honoring (1 Kings 8:22-28). Certainly these comments of Scripture indicate that Solomon was a regenerate man.

Solomon wrote three books of Scripture (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon), which would indicate that he was a regenerate man and that God’s desire was to communicate His eternal message through this man. It has been said that in Proverbs, the wisdom of Solomon is seen and in Ecclesiastes the folly of Solomon is seen.

Solomon’s real downfall began when he started to really love foreign wives and marry them (see 1 Kings 11:1-10). Solomon at one time had a heart that did seek after God and really desired to do what was right. However, his sin caught up with him, and his heart was eventually drawn away from the Lord. Solomon did forsake the Lord. He became an idolater and did not fully commit his life to God (11:6). Here is a man who is not persevering. Solomon tried to kill Jereboam as he tried to take over the kingdom. In fact, we find Solomon unrepentant and in carnality up to the point of his death (12:41-43).

The book of Ecclesiastes reveals his life of wandering and emptiness when he departed from the Lord and failed to serve Him (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2). The term “**under the sun**” speaks of a life lived out on planet earth which is independent of God. It’s a worthless and empty life apart from God. Solomon realized that later in life he blew it and lived in carnality (2:10-11). He also realized the emptiness of the carnal life (1:14; 2:18, 20; 5:10). As Solomon contemplated his carnal life, he realized that God would have the final say about the way he had lived. Our lives will be examined and scanned

for our effectiveness for the Lord. Unfortunately, Solomon did not persevere in holiness. His life of carnality overtook him and he failed miserably.

5. Uzziah crashed

King Uzziah did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord (2 Chronicles 26:1-4). However, when Uzziah became powerful, he fell into pride and became unfaithful to the Lord and even attempted to burn incense upon the altar (26:15-19). This was absolutely forbidden by God. As he was burning this incense upon the altar, he was struck with leprosy on his forehead (26:20). King Uzziah had leprosy until he died. He lived in a separate house and was excluded from the temple of the Lord. Here again was a regenerate man who did not prevail in holiness and dedication to the Lord. This is why God judged him in this way.

6. A righteous man crashed – Ezekiel 3:20

The Bible speaks about a man who can be living righteously and then turn away into a way or life that is full of iniquity and is undesirable before the Lord. He can certainly live like a wicked man after living in such a righteous manner for many years. This tells us that not every regenerate believer prevails or perseveres in a holy way of life. He can choose to live in a defiant state away from the Lord and what is right.

7. Peter crashed – see Luke 22:54-62

Most of us are familiar with Peter's crash in his Christian life. He denied the Lord. He denied that he was a follower or disciple of the Lord. Imagine that. Admitting that you were not a follower of Christ when all along you were following Christ. This was a great blunder and sin on Peter's part. And yet we find that Peter was truly a saved man whom Jesus prayed for (Luke 22:31-32). In the case of Peter, he would once again turn his life around and be restored or "converted" to his former walk with the Lord (James 5:19-20). According to James, it is possible for true Christians to stray away from the truth. They do not always persevere.

8. The Galatians crashed – see Galatians 5:7

These Christians were led astray from the truth about the grace of God. They began their salvation experience clinging to the glorious truth of how God's grace alone saves a person. However, through the infiltration of false teachers they began to fall from grace or the teaching about how Christ alone justifies them (see 5:1,4,9). They had not continued in the truth, as they should have.

These Christian people crashed in their Christian belief. They adopted a heretical view of salvation when they began to follow this false teaching about the Gospel (1:6). They

no longer were doing well as Paul suggests in 5:7. They were no longer persevering in the truth, as they should have been (see Galatians 2:21). They did not believe truth, as God wanted them to believe it. They no longer were following the teaching about God's grace. There are Christians today who do not persevere in truth. They can follow error and fail to dedicate their lives to the truth even though they think they are. This is a tragic reality that the Calvinist must face. Not all Christians persevere in the truth. Many are sidetracked into teachings that are not square with the Bible.

9. Demas crashed – see 2 Timothy 4:10

Paul's companion and close associate (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24) in the ministry evidently had his heart stolen away by the world. This grieved Paul because Demas had defected from the ministry and went back into the world. He no longer followed the Lord's will for his life. He lacked the credentials of a true disciple at this point in his life.

10. Church members crash – see 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

Here was a church member who was living in sin with his stepmother. The church needed to discipline this man. In fact, Paul delivered this man out of the haven and protection of the church into the domain of Satan for discipline through the working of the Evil One. The purpose was for chastisement, so this saved brother would be restored to the fellowship of God's people in the future (see 2 Corinthians 2 :5-10). Two other church members who crashed were named in 1 Timothy.

1Timothy 1:19-20

“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

2 Timothy 2:17-18

“And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

These men, who seemed to be believers, had made a shipwreck out of their own faith in the resurrection. Like the Galatian believers, they had been caught up in error. Greek philosophers typically viewed the soul as immortal and the body as only a temporary prison that would die and never exist again. The idea of the physical resurrection of the body, both Christ's and the Christians, was therefore foreign and difficult for them to grasp. Hence, there was a natural tendency toward heresies which rejected bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15; Acts 17:32). The heresy of Philetus and Hymenaeus probably involved the idea that resurrection was a purely spiritual affair which occurred at the time of conversion or baptism. But bodily resurrection is the

keystone of Christian doctrine, as Paul showed. These believers evidently defected from truth and were disciplined for their apostasy into error.

11. Ananias and Sapphira crashed – see Acts 5:1-11

These two believers crashed in their Christian journey by keeping back a portion of the price of the land, which they had sold. They lied by claiming that they had given all that they had received for the price of the land when in reality they had not. Their sin was not that they held back a portion of the land price, but that they lied about what they had really given. God brought judgment upon their lives because of their failure to be open and honest. They did not persevere to the end of their lives.

12. Saints can crash (this is a general observation in Scripture)

2 Peter 3:17-18

“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, **fall** from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

Peter warns the brethren about falling “from your own stedfastness.” This is a warning about apostasy in the Christian life. This is not an apostasy from faith in the person and work of Christ. It is rather a departure from the trues of the Word of God that are needful for maintaining a healthy Christian life. The word “fall” means to drop away or be driven off one’s course in life. The danger of falling away is something real in the Christian life. The way to keep from falling is to keep on growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (vs. 18). This obviously means to grow by learning to rely upon the strengthening grace of Jesus Christ and the knowledge of His abiding presence in your life.

2 Peter 1:10-11 also says:

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never **fall**: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The reason why this warning is given to these believers (“ye shall never fall”) is because there was a very real possibility that they could fall (trip or stumble) from their present state of godly and fruitful living as Peter had just described. But instead of stumbling into a state of ineffectiveness they could make their high calling sure by living this fruitful and spiritual life that Peter had just described in the previous verses. The end result would be an entrance into the millennial kingdom, which would be with rich reward and privilege (note the word “abundantly”).

2 Timothy 1:15

“This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be **turned away** from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.”

2 Timothy 4:16-17

“At my first answer no man stood with me, but **all men forsook me**: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”

It was dangerous to be a Christian in Rome. Roman persecution of Christians was on the rise. Therefore, we see how many believers and even some leaders (Phygellus and Hermogenes) did not want to identify with Paul the apostle since this would mean identifying with the Christianity of Paul and suffering at the hands of the government. The situation had gotten far worse after the fire of Rome in July of A.D. 64. Nero made the Christians scapegoats, and many were tortured and died. I think Paul understood the reason for their unfaithfulness, and he expressed the hope that it would not be held against them. Paul knew the outcome of identifying with him in this terrible time of persecution. Their failure does not consist of a total defection from the faith or the truth of the Word of God. Their failure in this case means that they were scared to identify themselves with Paul and the Lord for fear of persecution. This is much similar to Peter's experience when he denied that he knew Christ. At any rate, many believers at this point in time were unwilling to come out and identify themselves as Christians in the same way Paul the apostle did. They were fearful of the consequences. Therefore, we can assume that they were not persevering, as they should be in this particular time of their lives. One must ask, “Would I persevere in such brutal times as the early church faced? Would I make my light shine?”

1 Timothy 5:8

“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath **denied the faith**, and is worse than an infidel.”

Here we discover that a believer is warned about the possibility of denying the faith or the truth that the Word of God emphasized concerning family care. When the Christian man does this he does not turn into an infidel but becomes worse than and unbeliever. In a very real sense, this is an apostasy in the Christian life that can occur. No loss of salvation is said to take place as the Arminian assumes. It merely states that a believer can lapse away from truth and fail to respond to that which God has told him to do. This is a very real possibility in the Christian life. This is why God must discipline the lives of His children (see Hebrews 12:5-9) and even sometimes prematurely take them home to be with him (1 John 5:16). Discipline is the consequence of Christian apostasy. Because believers will not listen to Him and respond to His truth, there comes a time when God must spank His children. It's very clear that believers do not

always persevere in their lives to the very end. Some do not persevere in what God tells them to do in His Word and will suffer the chastisement of God upon their lives.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 addresses that same issue:

“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.”

In this case, Paul urged the church not to associate with a disobedient member “that he may be ashamed.” Here was a person who was lazy and did not work to support himself or his family (2 Thess. 3:10-11). He needed to know that his actions were wrong. Therefore, the church had to discipline him and not associate with him in the assembly meetings. Nevertheless, they were to “admonish him as a brother.” This tells us that a man may not persevere in his Christian life and still be a brother. The idea that Christians cannot continue in a pattern of sin for some time is simply foreign to Scripture.

Hebrews 3:12 says:

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in **departing from the living God.**”

Paul is talking to the believers in this section of Scripture and clearly recognizes the possibility that some can depart (remove, revolt) from God. This means that Christians can depart from God’s will and wander from God’s blessing in their lives even as the children of Israel refused to listen to God concerning entrance into the Promised Land. They ended up wandering in the wilderness for forty years! I think some Christians can retreat into their own wilderness and never really persevere in God’s will and plan for their lives. They can become cozy Christians and never really launch out and follow God’s perfect will for their lives. They would rather do their own thing in life and never submit to God’s overall wonderful plan for their lives.

Hebrews 4:10-11 says:

“For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man **fall** after the same example of unbelief.”

The believers are exhorted to actively labor in their day to day practical living to claim the promise of salvation’s rest in their lives. How wonderful it is to simply cease from your works as a way of acceptance and salvation before God (see vs. 10). This is the true Sabbath rest for believer’s today. The Christian must actively apply and appropriate this wonderful rest to his life, as he believes only in Christ for salvation. If he does not believe the promises about eternal life, then he will fall into the place of unbelief concerning what Christ has promised him about eternal life. There are Christians who simply do not have the assurance of their salvation since they have

been led into the Galatian error of legalism. Therefore, they fall into unbelief in regards to the teaching of free grace. They fall from the teaching about the grace of God (Galatians 5:4) and “come short” of the promise concerning salvation’s rest and assurance in Christ alone (see Hebrews 4:1). Not all Christians persevere in truth as they should. They can choose to reject clear truth about salvation’s rest in Christ. God is asking these Christians to open their hearts to truth. “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7).

Hebrews 6:4-6

“For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, **if they shall fall away**, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.”

This much-disputed passage has often been used to teach that Christians can finally fall away from God and be lost. But the point of this section of Scripture is addressed to Christians who have been enlightened to truth (Heb. 10:32), tasted of salvation’s gift (Rom. 6:23) and who have receive the blessings of the Holy Spirit, which includes the Spirit’s baptism. This results in a new living union with Jesus Christ and brings Christ’s eternal life into our spirits (1 Cor. 12:13). It seems that the writer of Hebrews is stressing that if these Christians fall away (fall aside or deviate) back into the sacrificial system of Judaism, then they are placing themselves in a *hypothetical situation* that could never take place or occur.

If they go back to the sacrifices, it’s as if they are saying that they do not trust in the sacrifice of Christ alone to save them. Therefore, they could not be saved! It’s as if they are saying by their actions that Christ would have to die a second time in the future (“crucify to themselves the son of God afresh”). As a result they would then have to be saved all over again (vs. 6 - “renew them unto repentance”) or else be judged for all eternity (vs. 8 - “whose end is to be burned”). What a horrible thought! *Of course, this hypothetical situation could never occur even if they did go back to the sacrificial system.* This is because Christ saves us forever despite our lapses in faith and living (see Hebrews 7:25; 10:14). However, the writer stresses the possibility of these Christians going back or moving away from the truth about Christ.

The fact of the matter is this. These Christians could become sidetracked by going back into the practicing system of Judaism, which they had been associated with for so long. Certainly this is a Christian apostasy that could take place even though the outcome would not result in the eternal judgment of these Christians. This is because the whole matter being viewed was only a hypothetical situation designed to get the believers to understand that Christ is all they need and that their assurance for salvation must be placed in Him and Him alone. These believers evidently lacked the

assurance of their salvation as indicated in Hebrews 10:22-23. We must understand that it was hard for them to get rid of the ritual for the real thing (see Hebrews 10:26). *The writer of Hebrews is simply expressing a hypothetical situation to these believers who lacked assurance to get them to realize that their assurance of salvation was to be in Christ and Christ alone!* There is no more need to go back to the sacrificial system. Assurance will not be found there (Hebrews 10:3-4). Assurance is only found in the once and for all death of Christ (Hebrews 9:28; 10:11-14). Believe it and have assurance!

Please Note: These examples of Christian apostasy or turning away from various truth and godly living do not refer to the absolute denial of the person and work of Christ and the matter of God's saving grace. The Bible is very clear that all regenerate Christians will persevere in key doctrines concerning the deity, virgin birth and person and work of Christ (see Hebrews 10:38-39; 1 Peter 1:9; 1 John 2:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12). True believers do not ultimately "lose their faith" in regards to the basic tenants of Christ and Christianity. Nor will they totally ostracize themselves from truth and Christianity. To do so would only prove that they were never within the ranks of the redeemed and true Christianity (see 1 John 2:18-19; John 6:66).

Genuine believers will not repudiate Christ after coming into a saving relationship with Him. Nor will they fail to manifest some fruit in their lives. **However, Christians can crash in their personal lives in matters of living and doctrinal teaching. They can be led astray and remain in wrong teaching and living.** Of course, this manner of living will always bring confusion and God's chastening in some measure upon their lives. Furthermore, those believers who fail to follow truth and serve the Lord as they should will lose reward (Colossians 2:18; 2 John 8). The Bible teaches the real possibility of loss of rewards. It also teaches that not all believers will overcome in their practical lives and be given equal privilege of rule in the coming kingdom. Only kingdom rulership will be give to those believers who are considered to have overcome in their practical living.

Revelation 2:26 says:

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."

This would seem to indicate that perseverance is not a sure thing in all believers' lives. All believers will indeed bear fruit and a certain amount of change in their lives but not all believers can be said to overcome or persevere as the Calvinist claims. **There is a vast difference between bearing some fruit or change in life and being a person who overcomes in life by a much more consistently developed pattern of godliness and victory.** If perseverance would simply mean that there is a certain amount of change that takes place in a believer's life then the definition would be usable. **But in the Reformed theology of today the idea of perseverance seems to**

stress something more than merely a change of life. The term is used in such a way to stress that all believers will live more of a consistent godly life than a worldly life. The idea in modern Calvinism concerning perseverance is that it does away with carnal Christianity by assuming that there can be no Christian that perseveres if they live a predominately fleshly life.

The fact of the matter is this. Not every believer will develop a consistent victorious life and live in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord. *I did not say that they would never produce fruit and exhibit some measure of change in life.* All believers do manifest change in life but the change that the Calvinist contends for and the change that the Scriptures indicate are two different things. Not every believer will overcome in a practical sense and be rewarded in the same manner. This would indicate that there are degrees in Christian living and various stages in Christian living that does not fit into the definition of perseverance that the Calvinist uses. Not every believer will persevere in good works or overcome unto the very end of his life. If every believer would overcome in the same victorious way, then John would not mention about only certain believers overcoming through their outward display of consistent faithful living (Rev. 2:26). Some Christians will fail the test or be disqualified from receiving a certain amount of reward and future privileges of rule with Christ because of their lack of discipline and concentration for Christ (see 1 Cor. 9:27). Not every believer is seen to persevere and overcome. There are those who will not overcome as they could have if they had not been so earthly minded. However, their failure to not overcome does not mean that they never had any righteous acts produced in their lives by the regenerating life of Christ. It only means that they did not manifest a large amount of change and victory consistently in their lives.

13. The Corinthians crashed – 1 Corinthians 11:29-30

Scripture gives particular attention to the Corinthian believers. The Corinthian believers were using alcoholic wine at the Love Feasts and becoming drunk (1 Cor. 11:21). So at the remembrance of the Lord's death they were not fit to partake of communion or the Lord's table. This brought God's judgment upon their lives. This judgment was a sin unto death to the lives of these sinning Corinthian believers (see 1 Cor. 11:30). Since they did not show respect toward the Lord's body, the Lord was going to weaken their bodies physically and even take the lives of some of the Corinthians. This is called a sin unto physical death that a believer can commit (1 John 5:16). It's the sin that is spoken about in the context of believers and not unbelievers. The sin unto death is not so much a specific type of sin as it is continuing in some particular sin without repentance. The Christians' lack of zeal for Christ and bad testimony becomes grounds for early dismissal from this life on earth.

The idea that all Christians will persevere in holiness to the end of their lives is the dream of the Calvinist and Lordship teacher. Not every believer perseveres. In fact,

who really can sit down today and say that they have persevered the way that they would like to? We all crash in life and sin. Sometimes we can sin miserably as these examples prove. We are not what we want to be, but thank God we are not what we used to be. *The point is that believers who place faith in Christ do not always persevere or demonstrate true commitment to Christ in their everyday living. They do not always remain disciples of the Lord. Nor do all believers finally persevere in good works to the end of their life as the Calvinist says.* Some believers are even ushered into Heaven prematurely because of their weakened testimony for Christ.

The whole problem that the Lordship teachers must face is this. How many sins must a person commit and how often must one sin and how long must a person sin in order to realize that he has not persevered, as he should, and therefore prove that his faith and salvation were false? Once again we see how the basis of salvation rests upon the way a person lives.

Here are some quotes from John MacArthur who is a leading defender of the Lordship Salvation view:

“Salvation is for those who are willing to forsake everything. Jesus takes no one unwilling to come on those terms.”

“Saving faith is a commitment to leave sin and follow Jesus Christ at all costs.”

“Eternal life brings immediate death to self.”

Do you get the picture of this view? **There are terms to meet and requirements to follow in order to be saved. Self instead of Christ becomes an issue in salvation.** John MacArthur and his followers claim that we do not understand the issues. I once had a dedicated follower of John MacArthur (a MacArthurite) in my study. He too was claiming that I just did not understand the real issues. I understand the issues and the main issue clearly. The main issue is that John MacArthur has distorted the Gospel. There is no doubt about it. *God does not require any terms or death to self when it comes to salvation.* He requires simple faith or trust in His Son. **Faith can only be one thing – faith.**

Now here are the real questions that we need to ask those who teach lordship\mastery\discipleship salvation or those who teach that a person must willingly forsake all sin and surrender their entire earthly life to the Lord in order to be saved or sure of his salvation.

- What if later on in life I become unwilling to forsake everything?

- When I do sin, how can I know that I truly had an obedient saving faith in the past, when I was supposedly saved?
- How much defection is necessary to qualify my faith as untrue and not genuine?
- When I sin and fail to follow Christ, how can I really have the assurance that I am saved?

These are questions, which Lordship Salvation teachers cannot answer. However, there are many Lordship teachers who hold to eternal security in Christ. Therefore, they confuse people with a cover up statement such as this:

“A moment of failure does not invalidate a disciples credentials.”

One must wonder if two moments or three moments would take away the necessary credentials of a true disciple. Maybe it's a week, month or year of defection from Christ. Who really can tell? And that's just the point. You cannot tell. Neither can the Lordship Salvation teachers. The false message that says faith includes obedience will lead a person to examine his life in order to try and determine if he really is saved or lost. He will painfully wonder if he was truly saved in the past when he believed and promised to commit his life to God. He will also wonder if he is truly saved presently within his life. Lordship Salvation produces a tremendous bondage upon the person's life that is not necessary.

Galatians 5:1 summons us:

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

We can be free from the law of bondage and works as a way of giving us salvation and acceptance before God. ***We do not have to be brought under the system, which entangles us with the work of discipleship or death to self as a way to know that we are saved.*** Christ has set us free from any system of performance that promises salvation through our obedience in life. He has also set us free from the fear of being judged because we do not match up to a certain standard of law. The songwriter said, “I'm free, praise the Lord, free at last.” Are you free?

Here is another statement by John MacArthur:

“...the true disciple will never turn away completely.”

The questions we must ask in return are:

- “How far can a person turn away until they are considered to have completely turned away?” (Who really knows!)

- “Could a disciple turn away 25% or 50% or 90% and still know that he or she was saved when they first determined to believe and follow Christ?”
- “If a believer can make wrong choices in his or her life, can they make two or two hundred and still be saved?”
- “Should an evangelist send back to their seats all those people who walked down the church aisle to the words of the hymn, ‘Just as I am’ but were not willing to forsake all of their sin?”
- “When a child wants to accept Christ as Savior, must the person leading them to Christ attempt to make the young child aware of all the future adult decisions that they must make in order to be a disciple of Christ?”
- “When presenting the Gospel to people, must you probe into their past and present in order to investigate every area of their lives that they need to forsake so that they can be saved?”
- “Must people hold off from accepting Christ until they either willingly or completely forsake certain sins in their lives?”
- “Would you tell a drug addict to quit using drugs in order to be saved?”
- “Would you tell someone who is living in the open sin of adultery to forsake his sin before he comes to Christ?”
- “Would you tell someone that he needs to quit smoking before he can truly be saved?”

Dear friends, all of these questions demonstrate how confusing the simple matter of presenting salvation and the Gospel has become for the Lordship Salvation teacher. This kind of relativity and false teaching leaves people in the dark about their salvation. It breeds confusion in the hearts of searching people about their actual salvation and the assurance of their salvation.

When I was a teen, I used to play a game at our church retreats called capture the flag. It was always played in the dark. One side would try to capture the flag that was heavily guarded somewhere in the woods across the enemy line. Between the two enemy lines there was a place called “no man’s land.” This was a place where both groups could wonder around and try to pull people across their line and capture them. When you were out in the middle of those lines it was like you were in the middle of nowhere. You were unprotected and unsure if you would be captured and disciplined

by being taken into the enemies' prison house across the line of the enemy. Of course it was always the girls who were captured and screaming for help on the other side! The boys needed to come to their rescue.

The illustration will prove my point. When you follow the Lordship teaching, which concludes that a certain unknown amount of failure or sin will dismiss you from being a saved disciple of Christ, then you are standing in "no man's land." *You leave yourself in the obscurity of darkness about your salvation and place yourself in a type of spiritual "no man's land" where you are unprotected and unsure of your salvation. In essence, you are in the middle of a spiritual nowhere.* You don't know where you are going (Heaven or hell) and you don't have any clue whether or not you will ever be good enough to get to Heaven.

Well, another code word that the Lordship Salvation teachers throw around is the saying called "**easy believism**." Have you ever heard of this expression? The mockery behind this expression is this. If faith is left to be faith, which is simple trust or reliance upon Christ, without any obedience or commitment attached to it, then faith becomes incomplete or of no value in God's eyes. *In other words, if faith is nothing more than placing trust or confidence in the Lord Jesus to save you, then faith becomes too easy, insufficient, incomplete and of no value.* There must be the promise of obedience, a life commitment and total surrender to Jesus in order to express genuine faith in Christ. Without complete surrender or commitment your faith cannot be real. Therefore, your salvation cannot be real.

Once again this type of talk is completely opposite of what the Bible teaches. It is what I call double talk. The kind of faith that Jesus is looking for is childlike trust in Him. That is the only kind of faith that has any lasting and eternal value. Jesus is not adding obedience or commitment to faith. Faith is no longer faith when you add to it in any way. Jesus Christ will honor your simple personal faith, trust, dependence and reliance upon Him. Faith is a simple or easy concept to understand. God has not made it complicated. Man in his attempt to redefine simple faith has begun to mock the true meaning of faith by calling it "easy believism."

Jesus said in Matthew 18:2-3:

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

A little child is tender, humble and trusting. Children jump into your arms as an adult and fully depend upon you for safety and protection. They know that you will take care of them no matter what. A child will say, "Just hold me daddy, just hold me mommy. I'm scared." That is the kind of faith that Jesus is looking for. He is looking for childlike faith. A faith that looks to Christ in simple tender trust and pours all of its confidence or

reliance upon Christ for salvation. Call it “easy believism” if you will. **I wonder what hard believism is?** Isn't all this double-talk so very silly? *Whatever you say about it, faith will always be one thing - faith.*

The Lordship Salvation teachers are saying that we just do not understand the issues. That's the whole problem, we just do not understand the issues. What issues? There are no issues about salvation. *God's grace is free, salvation is free and the way to receive salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone.* There is no issue here. The whole problem is that these teachers do not understand the essential nature of grace and faith as it relates to salvation. And even if they do understand to some degree, they are putting everything in a blender and mixing it all up! They are making a milkshake out of the meaning of grace and faith. Furthermore, it is the proponents of this view who are speaking out of both sides of their mouths and are actually promoting a subtle form of legalism, which is corroding the true picture of the grace of God.

Another section of Scripture that the Lordship writers try to use to support their theory that faith and works are tied together is James chapter two. This section of Scripture has been greatly misunderstood through the years. **James is not teaching that works are tied together with faith.** As we have discovered already, works are separate from faith and contrasted to faith (Galatians 2:8-9; Romans 3:28; 4:1-3). James is not contradicting other Scripture as he writes this epistle. **James is teaching that works follow faith. That is altogether different from saying that works are part of faith.**

Someone has said:

“Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone.”

F. W. Robertson adds:

“Lightning alone strikes, but not the lightning which is without thunder.”

The true meaning of these statements is that a certain amount of works will always follow genuine faith in the Lord. This is definitely biblical. *However, these works are not to be viewed as being part of an individual's initial saving faith in Christ (Acts 16:31).* Works are not to be interwoven with a person's response of faith in Christ for salvation. Rather, these works are viewed as following a person's faith in the Lord and are distinct from initial saving faith in the Lord.

Lordship writers of the Reformed tradition simply tie together into one lump the saving faith that results in salvation and the serving faith for the Christian life. There is a difference between faith that brings grace and salvation into our lives and the faith that follows salvation. Lordship Salvation teachers never distinguish between the faith that brings justification (Romans 5:1) and the faith that results in a certain change of life following salvation (James 2:14,17).

Paul argued for the **priority** of faith over works in salvation (Romans 4:5). James argues for the **proof** of faith in our everyday living. *James is saying that a genuine belief in the truth will produce a genuine behavior of the truth.* This cannot be overlooked as James writes. However, to press the point that works or obedience is tied in with the word or concept of faith is to miss the whole point that James is trying to make. **Works or obedience follows faith; it is not part of faith.** The two are separate and should remain separate. Trying to tie the two together (saving faith & serving faith) will cause great confusion. James does not tie the two concepts together, he merely reminds us that a certain amount of obedience or works will always follow a genuine decision of faith in Christ. Obedience is the result of faith.

This Scriptural teaching is not the same as what the Lordship teachers are promoting. They are promoting that believers will always persevere in good works or a changed life and basically live on top of the world never really collapsing in their Christian journey. They seem to be stressing and teaching that carnal Christianity is not a Biblical concept any longer. They are also placing a heavy emphasis on obedience as the indicator of one's salvation, which harbors on a works salvation. They are stressing that a person must die to all of his sins in life, surrender his whole life to God and yield fully to God in order to have real faith in Christ that brings salvation. This simply is a works salvation. All of these promises and attempts to live a certain way contradict what true faith really is and make a person's salvation based upon legalism.

James is teaching something altogether different. He is saying that there will be a manifested change in people's lives after they exhibit true faith in Jesus Christ. They will not live as they once lived and savor in ungodly living without any kind of change or fruit in their lives. And this change will occur after conversion. *However, James is not placing emphasis upon works as part of saving faith or an essential part of the Gospel and salvation itself.*

That every Christian will change is a Biblical truth. That every Christian will completely persevere in a changed life all of the time and be a spiritual Christian is not a Biblical truth. **There is a large variation in the lifestyle, fruit, obedience, and commitment among genuine believers. To try to pigeonhole Christians into a simple mold is impossible to do.** We would like to do this but we cannot. James is simply making the important point that there will be definite change in a person's life after he has exhibited genuine faith in Christ. A certain amount of fruit will be evidenced within his life. Obedience will always follow faith to some degree or in some measure. The point is not to be made that saving faith is actually linked to works. The point is stressed that saving faith always results in works in some measure. A person's new life that flows forth from their faith is telling volumes. **We must remember that James is not writing to tell us how to be saved or even have the assurance of our salvation. Nothing in this passage is intended to link the Gospel message with a person's need to**

be obedient so that they can determine if they have real faith. Nor is the passage designed to bring assurance of salvation. James was simply writing to explain the timeless truth that regenerate believers do live differently. He stresses that a person who is born again will have a practical faith that manifests itself in a changed life. They will possess a serving faith that can be seen in some measure to the outside world.

Take Hebrews 12:14 for instance. It says:

“Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

This statement is not telling you how to be saved or be right before God. It is telling you that there will be a manifested change in your life when you are saved. What a difference that is! Holiness will always result from a genuine conversion experience but holiness is never to be used to measure a person's status before God and attempt to be accepted before God. **Holiness is simply a road marker along the journey of life that tells you that you are a Christian. But holiness is never to be used to keep you accepted before God.** Holiness is never to be mixed with the only way to present yourself before God, which is through faith in the finished work of Christ. This is what James is saying to us about works. **Works do not tell us how we are accepted before God; they give us a road marker along the way that demonstrates we are already saved.** But these works must never be mixed with the way to present yourself before God, which is through faith in the finished work of Christ. Therefore, we are not to view holiness or works as being part of faith because faith in the finished work of Christ is the only thing that saves us and gives us eternal acceptance in God's sight. When you mix holiness and works with faith as Lordship Salvation teachers do, then you inevitably start to base your salvation and assurance on your manner of living and not upon Christ.

Let us restate something we said in our introductory remarks:

You do not believe or increase your faith by looking at works; you believe by looking at Christ. Faith is different than works (Romans 4:1-5). Therefore, works should never be used as an indication of a person's standing or acceptance before God. Instead of clinging to the promise of eternal life (1 John 5:10-13) many are clinging to the condition of their own lives.

Works are simply used as a secondary road marker along the way, which gives added encouragement to you, that you are God's child. To place faith in your works in any fashion, by looking at them and inspecting them in order to decide whether or not you have enough before God, will lead to a collapse of your faith alone in Christ. But to look at works as merely a secondary confirmation of your faith in Christ will bring added blessing and encouragement.

James is simply saying that when you take a panoramic or collective examination of a person's life, if there is no general pattern of change, if there is no bent (inclination or propensity) toward godly living, then that person never had real saving faith. He is not saved.

James has just been talking about the need for love to be seen in the lives of believers by not showing respect of persons. Just as true love gives no excuse for respect of persons, so the possession of true faith gives no license to dispense with good works toward other people. A believer must not only demonstrate his love by ready acceptance of others, but he must also demonstrate his faith by responsible aid to others. James is going to emphasize the expression of true faith in this section of Scripture.

A brief outline of this section may clear up some of your questions.

1. There is the principle – 2:14-17

The principle is clearly stated in these verses. The principle is that true faith will always be evidenced by works. In other words, works will follow faith in Christ. A man may say that he has faith in Christ (14) and never demonstrate any change within his life. James assumes by the rhetorical question that this kind of faith cannot save a man because it was not true faith. **James is not saying that faith in Christ cannot save a man but this particular type of faith is not real or genuine.** Genuine faith always results in a change in the believer's life. There will be some fruit. He concludes that if works do not follow faith, then that faith is not true faith (17). It is a sham or unreal faith in Christ. It is a "dead" faith or a faith that has no life or genuineness attached to it (see also vs. 20).

2. There is the protest – 2:18

The protest comes from an imaginary objector. His protest is what many are saying today even within the Lordship Salvation teaching. In essence he is saying, "My works are my faith. My works make me right before God." Instead of separating faith and works, they tie the two together and make them one and the same. This is the fallacy. "I will show thee my faith by my works." That's what everyone is saying today. They are placing the emphasis upon works in order to measure their salvation. They have faith in their system of works, which they call surrender and obedience. This is not the true nature of faith alone in Christ alone.

3. There is the proof – 2:19-22

James goes on to answer the protest of the imaginary objector who says that works save him. He addresses the man who is claiming that his works are his faith. This is

actually the error of Reformed theology and Lordship Salvation teachers. **James is trying to put everything in perspective and demonstrate that works are not part of faith or faith itself but follow faith and give evidence of a man's faith.** James begins by saying that there is a demonic faith, which has faith in the existence of the one true God but never experientially results in obedience to this one true God (19). This type of faith is a dead faith as was stated earlier (20,17). It was never genuine. True faith is always followed by some measure of obedience.

James then gives two Old Testament examples of how works are to follow faith and give proof concerning the genuineness of a man's saving faith (21-22).

A. The example of Abraham (21-24)

The first Old Testament example is Abraham. Abraham was actually justified before God in Genesis 15:6 by only believing or having faith in what God had said concerning the Old Testament sacrifice (23). Then later in Genesis 22, Abraham gave proof of his justified position before God and saving faith, when he offered up his son Isaac. *I know this is a brilliant observation, but Genesis 15 comes before Genesis 22!* I am amazed at this brilliant finding! Just kidding.

The point is well made. Abraham was justified before God in Genesis 15 without any works. However, in Genesis 22 we discover how he gave proof of this justified position before God and his faith when he offered his son Isaac and obeyed God. Through this act of obedience, Abraham gave evidence of his saving faith. His act of obedience served as a barometer of his justified position before God and of his genuine faith in God.

When James says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works" (21) he is speaking from the standpoint that works give proof before other witnesses of our justification before God. Also, to be noted is how Abraham's faith was "wrought with works" (22). ***The works gave evidence or living proof before other witnesses of the veracity or truthfulness of his faith in God.*** In fact, when Abraham offered his only son upon the altar, his faith was made "perfect" (22). This simply means that his faith had reached its goal or matured. It had become stronger and stronger as the years passed by. Forty years prior to this time, Abraham probably could not have offered up his son upon the altar. It took time for his faith to mature and become strong. So this tremendous work or act of obedience was something that demonstrated or gave proof before other witnesses that his faith in God was very strong and had matured over the years. Our faith as well should grow stronger and become more mature as the years go by. Abraham's life serves as a good example to all of us. His works proved the validity of his faith as we see how Abraham's faith matured and reached its climax in the offering of his son upon the altar.

In verse 23, James is simply making the point that by Abraham's practice of obedience, he was demonstrating the fact that he was justified before God some 40 years prior to this event (Genesis 15:6). In other words, James is saying that Abraham's practice of obedience to God was a clear indicator that he was saved through faith many years prior to this event. *When Abraham demonstrated this act of obedience, it actually gave proof that the Scriptures were true, which said that Abraham believed God for salvation and received salvation many years prior to this event.* In other words, his obedience proved that he was already saved as the Scriptures verified.

B. The example of Rahab – 2:25

The Old Testament account of how Rahab the harlot helped and protected the Jewish spies gave outward evidence and proof that she had saving faith in God's salvation program. Her life was a living example of a person who was now saved. She was "justified by works" in the same sense that Abraham was – **from the standpoint that works gave proof before other witnesses of her justification before God.** In other words, James is saying that the way that Rahab demonstrated obedience gave living proof that she was now justified before God and had exhibited true saving faith in Him.

Someone has well said:

"Paul speaks about our justification before God. James speaks about our justification before men."

4. There is the practice – 2:26

James concludes by once again saying that a genuine faith in Christ will be evidenced by a changed life. The body separated from the spirit is dead in a physical sense. Likewise, a faith that does not result in works is dead in a spiritual sense. It was never true or real. It was only demonic or dead and never really trusted in Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. The point of the whole argument is that our practice in life or the way that we behave in life is speaking volumes about the true nature of our faith. *Your conduct is telling on you!* What is your conduct saying about your life and faith?

We must understand that James separates faith and works (obedience) unlike the Lordship Salvation teachers. *He also stresses that works follow faith and are not to be construed together with saving faith.* They are distinct. Works follow salvation and give proof of the genuine character of faith. He also reminds us that there is a saving faith that brings salvation into our lives and a serving faith, which results in a certain amount of works and change in lifestyle. In fact, this serving faith can grow or mature ("perfect") as Abraham's faith matured over the years. However, James is not saying that works actually result in salvation, and he is not arguing for the amount of works that a person must possess or the measure of obedience a person must have in order to give

evidence of his salvation. For those who are recently saved, praying before they go to bed may be the first evidence of fruit in their lives. Reformed writers suggest that we should not have to scrounge around looking for fruit in the lives of believers. But who is to say how much fruit a new convert is to possess and who is to say how fast their faith will develop and begin to mature. **James simply concludes that there will be a change. He stresses that a person who is born again will have a faith that manifests itself in a changed life. They will possess a serving faith that can be seen in some measure to the outside world. Their saving faith will result in serving faith.** This is a simple and wonderful truth. There is no hint of discipleship\mastery salvation in this passage. There is no hint of a person needing to hear a Gospel message that says you must obey the Lord and give up all of your sins so that your faith will be real and that Jesus will save you. This is completely foreign to what James is saying.

This passage has nothing to do with presenting the Gospel to lost people by telling them that they must obey God in order to have real faith. But it has everything to do with what comes after the Gospel! The faith that comes after the Gospel and salvation should not be construed together with the faith that comes before salvation. The faith before salvation results in eternal life and assurance. But the faith that comes after salvation changes into a serving faith that will vary in every individual life and mature throughout many years.

Simply stated:

“Faith does not include works, but faith will always be evidenced by works.”

Lordship Salvation teachers do realize today that not everyone who says he has faith in God really has genuine faith. This is why they started this Lordship Salvation crusade. **But there is no need to change the Gospel just because many people do not have genuine faith in Christ.** Keep the Gospel message the same and merely identify that many are not saved because there is no evidence of fruit and change in their lives. **You do not have to change the message of free grace just because people do not change!** In other words, don't change free grace in order to accommodate what is going on or happening in our day in relationship to false professions. Both sides are aware that there are many false professions that lead to no change in lifestyle.

There are many *professors* but not all are *possessors*. And I must say that I am weary of this as well. But I will not change the message of the Gospel to try and counteract what is happening in our society. **The message of free grace is not responsible for false professions of faith as the Lordship Salvation advocates suggest. People themselves are responsible for false professions of faith.** There is that breed of evangelist and soulwinner who forces decisions on people. This causes false professions. Also, there are those people who claim to accept Christ but never really

repent of their sins or change their mind about their wickedness before God (John 3:19). Therefore, the root of repentance which results in spiritual life (Acts 11:18) has never occurred in their heart (Matthew 13:2) and as a result no fruit or change occurs in their life. However, we should not change the Gospel just because some people do not decide to change. **Don't throw the baby out with the bath water! The possibility of false profession cannot be totally avoided by a clear presentation of the Gospel. Even Jesus had a Judas!** There have always been shallow professions of faith. The Bible is very clear on this matter. False professions of faith that do not result in any change of living are nothing new under the sun. It is not a new phenomenon to our century as Lordship teachers would want us to believe. We really need to stop and consider that not everyone who claims to have faith has faith in the right person, who is Christ, or has faith in Christ for the right reason. Biblical history unfolds this to us.

The Bible seems to teach that there are various types of faith that people can possess.

1. There is a demonic (intellectual) faith.

James 2:19

“Thou believest (intellectually) that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe (intellectually), and tremble.”

This type of faith is not saving faith. This is what James calls a dead faith (20) that does not result in any changed life or result in obedience. Many people today that I talk with seem to have this type of faith. The media and world at large talk about God in one way or another. They recognize that He must exist while using His name as some kind of great ruler in the sky above. They will say such a statement as this, “We will keep you in our prayers.” They intellectually believe in the existence of God. The problem is that they do not want to be accountable to Him or want to obey Him. Therefore, this type of person will not want to personally receive Christ as their Savior and invite Him into their lives. *Like the demons themselves, many people believe in God, but then go and live like the demons in rebellion and open scandal against God.* This is because they do not personally respond to Christ in true faith and accept Him as their Savior. It's because they do not want any accountability to Him.

I was talking to a man who was chewing on a 12-inch cigar. He said that he believed in God or the man upstairs. Well, there are many people who believe in God but that is all. Their belief or faith stops there. There is an intellectual knowledge of His existence and being. Demons believe this about God. They know that there is one true God and that this God barred them from Heaven. The problem with demonic faith is that there is no accountability before God. *This is a faith that is merely intellectual.* It is not saving faith.

2. There is a spectacular faith.

John 2:23-25

“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”

This type of faith is not saving faith or faith that results in salvation. Multitudes followed Christ during His earthly ministry who merely possessed this type of faith. These people wanted to witness the miracles of Jesus. They were caught up in the spectacular element wrapped around Christ (see John 2:24-25). As you read this account, you will notice that many were said to have believed in Christ after witnessing His miracles (23). However, this type of faith was not genuine saving faith. It was what I call a spectacular faith. After seeing all the miracles that Jesus performed, this group is said to have believed in Jesus.

These people were curious about all the miraculous hype and spectacular happenings surrounding the person of Jesus and they did believe in Jesus. *They believed that He was a supernatural person with supernatural abilities who was doing supernatural things.* However, they did not believe on Jesus as their own personal Messiah and Savior. The sad commentary on these peoples' lives is that they were not saved. *The point is that they believed in Jesus, but Jesus did not believe in them (24)!* How utterly amazing that is to me. Belief in miracles is not an indicator that you have genuine belief in Christ for salvation. There is a type of faith that is only interested in the spectacular element.

I believe this type of faith is seen in the account of Matthew 7:21-23:

“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. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Here are the miracle workers themselves! These people had done the spectacular. They had cast out demons and supposedly performed great supernatural feats in the name and authority of Christ. But Jesus clearly reveals that when He returns to establish His kingdom, He will say to these type of people that He never knew them. Their faith was only a spectacular faith that was centered around the supernatural. They geared everything around what one could experience or feel.

With the expansion and promotion of the charismatic movement in our world today, we have many followers of Christ who are in the same boat as these people were. They are following Christ for the spectacular element and for this alone. They say that they

believe in Christ but for what reason? Many believe in Jesus for their supposed miracles and are surrounded by the tremendous hype and spectacular element that accompanies these healing meetings. ***They want Jesus so far as their health is concerned!*** However, they never have accepted Christ as their Savior. Their belief is merely a spectacular belief in the miracle maker called Jesus. Sadly, we have this type of individual today. We might term him as a curious disciple who is out for a quick medical fix but is not interested in the salvation that Jesus really offers.

John 12:37 says:

“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.”

It is possible to have a supernatural faith that is caught up in the miraculous element but still not believe on Jesus! I once talked with a woman who was rather disturbed by her husband’s lack of change after his supposed conversion at a charismatic service. She said that there was a real excitement that filled the air and he walked forward at the end of the service. However, she was disturbed to find out that there was absolutely no change in his life and no interest in spiritual things. What had happened to this man? The simple answer is that nothing happened at all. He was no doubt caught up in the spectacular and emotional element of what was going on and wanted to get a hold of something that was spectacular and supernatural. However, he never did get a hold of Christ and the salvation that He offered.

3. There is a need’s faith.

John 6:26

“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

This is not saving faith. There is a type of faith which people have in Jesus or God today that places trust in Jesus for His provision for their lives. *In short, people have faith in Christ in order to get their belly full.* There are many like this in the world today. Their faith in Christ is centered upon their own selfish needs in life. They claim to be Christians because they have faith in a God to meet all of their needs and trust Him to do so.

I once met an elderly lady who said that she was a Christian but gave absolutely no evidence of that fact in her life. She spouted off to me about how she trusted in God to meet her needs and thanked Him everyday for providing her needs. Of course she gave God thanks for all her money and food when she was not cursing God’s name! I really believe that there are multitudes who have a very generic faith in Christ today like these hungry people had during Christ’s day. They are trusting God for their needs in a very generic and generalized way and that is all. Their faith is not genuine saving faith in God’s Son for salvation. They have not placed their trust in Christ as their

Savior from the damnation of hell. All they have is “need faith” in God. **They have a savior for their needs but not for their souls!**

There are many in the world like this today. The wealth and health movement of today with its prosperity theology is also pressing this type of faith. You have heard the slogan, “Have a need plant a seed.” In other words, give me your twenty-five dollars (tax deductible) and you will have your need met. This approach confuses many people to say the least. It causes people to place faith in Christ for the wrong reasons. Many simply have a “need faith” in Christ today and that is all. It is not saving faith.

4. There is a works faith.

James 2:18

“I will shew thee my faith by my works”

Luke 18:18 is a common response today:

“And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

This of course is not saving faith. There are those who are looking for salvation by what they can do or achieve in life. Their faith is actually seated in their works or what they can do in order to inherit eternal life. They have enough faith to believe that God will save them if they conform to a certain standard in life. The fact of the matter is that God will not save anyone on the basis of his works because all are sinners before His presence in need of the blood sacrifice of Jesus to wash their sins away (Titus 3:5).

We have all talked with these type of people in life. We may ask if they are saved and their first response is that they attend such and such a church or that they have their name on the cradle roll of the church since they were a baby. They will tell you that they bake pies for the church sales and sing in the choir. They will tell you that they were baptized or have gone through catechism classes. What is wrong with their faith? Their faith is directed in the wrong place. It is directed to their own performance or works. Jesus did not come to save those who think that they are righteous in their own eyes; He came to save those who know that they are sinners and in need of Christ’s saving sacrifice (Mark 2:17).

I want to tell you that many folks are not saved merely because they claim to have faith in Jesus or God! *The Lordship Salvation teacher needs to remember that this is exactly why so many people who call themselves Christians do not manifest any real change in life.* It’s because their faith was not saving faith. It was not genuine faith placed in Christ alone for salvation. In short, many people are not saved even though they say that they are. As a wise soul winner, we had better investigate where a person’s faith really lies. It must rest in the person and work of Christ on his behalf. If a person’s faith

is resting in any other thing or misdirected to something else, then it is a sham or false faith that will never bring salvation into his life.

For a further study concerning the different kinds of faith that the soul winner encounters when witnessing, please see the article entitled, "What Kind of Faith Do You Have?" It's available in the pastor's corner. We now want to move on in our study to another area of confusion.

5. There is the confusion about repentance.

God commands all people to repent because they are lost and headed toward hell's fire and eternal judgment. They need to repent right now in order to be saved forever from all of God's wrath and future judgment.

Mark 2:17

"When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Acts 17:30 says:

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

The Bible clearly and definitely teaches that no man can have the eternal forgiveness of sins and be saved unless he repents.

Acts 3:19

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..."

Jesus said in Luke 13:3:

"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

A person cannot miss this clear point revealed in Scripture. Without repentance there can be no salvation. Only certain judgment awaits the unrepentant sinner. Jesus says, "I tell you..." In other words, Jesus is saying: "What I say I mean. You had better listen or you will be sorry! Without repentance you will be burn in hell forever."

2 Peter 3:9 says:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

There is simply no question about the fact that the Bible teaches that one must repent in order to be saved. If you do not repent you will wind up in an eternal hell without any ray of hope of salvation. The words “perish” in the last two Bible passages has the connotation of spiritual ruin and loss of well being in the coming fires of judgment. Dear friend, unless you repent you stand without any hope at all. Only the misery of an eternal hell will be your portion. You must repent before it is too late!

The Bible teaches that those who have not repented are building up God’s wrath against themselves for the Great White Throne Judgment, when all of God’s wrath will be poured out upon the hopeless and helpless sinner in the eternal fires of Gehenna.

Romans 2:4-5

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

For the unrepentant sinner, only gloom and destruction awaits him. However, the story is altogether different for the repentant sinner. There is gladness that is associated with his repentance.

Luke 15:7,10

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

But what does the word repentance really mean? This is where the issue arises. For instance, Lordship Salvation teachers stress that repentance includes the idea of surrender and forsaking sin, changing your course of action in life. Thus, they conclude that when we share the Gospel with the lost, we must command them to repent in a Biblical fashion, which according to the Lordship Salvation teachers, means that people must surrender their entire lives to God and change their course in living and become a disciple of Christ.

This plays along with their whole scheme of Reformed teaching, which concludes that a person must change his life and become a disciple in order to be genuinely saved and in order to be sure of his salvation. The Lordship Salvation teachers have confused the true meaning of this word repentance. What we must do is define Biblical repentance and then see how the act of repentance fits into God’s saving program.

The major Greek word translated repentance basically means “to think differently or reconsider.” We could simplify this by saying that the word repentance means “to have

a change of mind, attitude or heart.” This understanding is seen in the Greek word for repentance (“metanoia” – pronounce “metonoyah”). It’s used many times throughout the New Testament and always means a change of mind and attitude. **It is essentially a substitution of the old mind for a new mind.** It means to think differently or reconsider. *The word implies a complete reversal of a person’s attitudes and convictions or an inward turning from what he used to believe or think about God, Jesus and himself.* This means that there will always be an inward turning and reversal from sin within the person’s heart when true Biblical repentance has occurred. It is only then that a person will seek pardon and cleansing from God.

A person who truly repents will have an inward change or reversal in his attitude and outlook about God, Jesus Christ and his own sinfulness before God. He will reconsider who God is and what Jesus has done for him and how sinful and vile he is before God Almighty. *Always remember that the change occurs inwardly and not outwardly.* As we will discover later, the fruit of repentance involves a change in conduct. But this is what comes after the root or inner change of repentance, which occurs at the time of salvation. True repentance will always result in a change of life but this change is not to be construed as part of the root or inner repentance of the heart that accompanies the immediate salvation of the soul. **True repentance involves a change of heart and mind on the inside.** After genuine inner repentance has occurred, the outside conduct of the person’s life will follow.

It would seem that both the intellectual and volitional (voluntary or act of the will) element about repentance is attached to this primary Greek word translated repentance (“change of mind”). A person who exhibits a change of mind about sin will many times voluntarily or willingly realize his dreadful, sinful plight before God and turn to Christ and be converted. *The volitional or willingness to turn to God from sin is one part of a person’s conversion before God.* It involves a total *inward* willingness and desire to be delivered from the bondage and judgment of sin. There needs to be an inward turning to God from sin or desire for pardon and cleansing (1 Thess. 1:9). These two aspects of repentance (intellectual & volitional) are closely associated with one another and are hard to separate.

However, one red flag must go up at this point. There are those people who can *intellectually* repent or change their minds about their sin but never have that inward willing desire to turn to God and be converted. They are like those whom Jesus spoke about in John 3:19 when He said, “... and men loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.” He also spoke of them in John 5:40 when He said, “And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.”

This type of person never has a real inward attitude or change of mind about his own sinfulness before God and his need to be forgiven. This is why he does not inwardly and willingly repent of his sin, desiring to be cleansed and released from the

strongholds of sin within his life. His will is still overpowered by his love for sin instead of looking at his utter sinfulness before God and his horrible condition before God. *A love for sin instead of an inward willingness to turn to God for salvation causes many people to stop short of the Biblical repentance which brings salvation into a person's life.*

A man may change his mind about his sin before God and still not turn to God in conversion. He may be nothing more than an "Almost thou persuadest me" Christian like king Agrippa (Acts 26:28). In other words, some people do not voluntarily or willingly make it their purpose to see their sin as a stench in God's nostrils or something that is offensive to Him. They do not desire forgiveness and pardon for their sin. *The intellectual aspect of repentance may be present but not the volitional part of repentance.* There may be no *inward turning* from sin or desire for pardon and cleansing. Such examples of this type of intellectual understanding of sin might be Pharaoh (Exodus 9:27); Balaam (Numbers 22:34); Achan (Joshua 7:20); King Saul (1 Samuel 15:24) and Judas (Matthew 27:4).

Allow me to say at this point that many theologians and teachers stress that the volitional (voluntary) aspect of repentance is when a person actually takes the outward action to turn away from his sin and forsake sin. However, this seems rather misleading when one comes to the realization that repentance itself is not the act of reformation or outward change. Change is what follows the act of repentance. This will be explained later in more detail. Genuine Biblical repentance, according to the Greek word "metanoia," is an inward change of attitude and mind or a new internal conviction about what one used to believe about God, Jesus, salvation and his own sin before God.

Emery Bancroft has rightly observed:

"Repentance ... is wholly an inward act, not to be confounded with the change of life that proceeds from it."

True repentance at the time of conversion is not an outward change in behavior but an inward change in a person's belief system. This means that true "metanoia" or repentance must also involve the inward voluntary act of the human mind and will to reverse the sin problem within one's life because of personal hatred for sin and because of sin's horrible blackness in God's sight. When this type of repentance occurs in an individual's heart, he has volitionally or voluntarily turned to God for salvation and is converted.

Now imagine yourself witnessing to an unsaved individual at the grocery store. He asks you the crucial questions, "Must I give up chewing tobacco in order to go to Heaven? You might answer by saying, "No, but you will have to go to hell to spit!" Just kidding. Here is another question you might be asked. Must I give up my love affair?

Must I quit going to the bar to have a drink with the buddies? How would you answer him? What would you say to him?

The proper answer is this: "You do not have to give up any sin in order to be saved and go to Heaven, but you will not want to be saved and become a Christian until you repent or change your mind about your sin." This is the best answer that you could give to such a person as this. Let's state it another way. **"You don't have to give up any sin in order to be saved, but you won't want to be saved until you change your mind about your sin and willingly desire pardon and freedom from your sin!"**

When someone asks questions like these, it will only prove that godly sorrow has not been working in the heart and that no genuine repentance has established itself within his heart. This is because genuine repentance involves a new attitude about sin. It's not the attitude of the person above who desires to keep on sinning because he loves his sin. Sin becomes horrible to the one who is repenting and will bring a person to the place where he will want to turn to God and forsake those sins, which are horrible in God's eyes. We must simply understand that if a person does not change his attitude or mind about his sin and voluntarily desire cleansing, pardon and freedom from sin, then true repentance has not occurred in his heart and this person does not want the salvation that Jesus offers. *When a person is not broken over their sin, then they are not ready to repent or have a different attitude about their sin before God.* When a person genuinely repents, he will voluntarily change his mind or have a different conviction or attitude about his sinful life and turn to God for salvation. He will have a whole new way of thinking, a voluntary reversal and inward change of heart about his sin before the presence of a holy God. This is why the person who loves their sin has not repented. **When you love your sin and want to continue in your sin, then it goes to prove that you have not had a change of attitude about your sin.**

The problem arises when those who teach Lordship Salvation press the issue of the absolute need for people to give up all their sins, surrender their whole life to Christ and promise to live for Him forever in order for them to be saved. They stress the need to forsake every known sin where you promise to serve Jesus the rest of your life. **We must remember that there is a vast difference between an inward change of attitude and heart about sin and the actual need or requirement to forsake sin in order to be saved.** *Lordship Salvation teachers simply confuse genuine repentance and make it a synonym for submission and forsaking of sins.* It is the **root** of repentance (inward change of mind and attitude about sin) that leads to salvation. It is not the fruit or outward result of repentance that is needed in order to be saved.

The root of repentance deals with the inward change of mind or a different heart attitude about sin and the way of salvation. However, it does *not* involve the fruit or outward change of life. This aspect of repentance follows salvation, as we will see later. The Biblical context will help us to determine what people are to repent or

change their heart about. *In other words, the context will determine what the object of repentance is.*

In true Biblical repentance a person will have a change of mind and heart about several matters:

1. *A person will have a change of mind about God (Acts 20:21).*

Acts 20:21

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Many people have a wrong concept of God today. Repentance toward God has to do with changing your mind about God. For instance, if a person believes that God is merely an idol, or some kind of New Age spirit, he must change his mind about His being and recognize that He is the true and living God and the only invisible creator of the universe. *An individual must have a right view of God.* There must be a reversal of a person’s concept about God. He may have believed certain things about God that are not true. He may have always believed that God overlooks sin and is not concerned with righteousness or that God is only a terrible judge without any mercy or grace. *People need to repent or change their minds about who God is and what He is like.* He is the true and living God who demands righteousness and yet provides grace and salvation to His creation.

Acts 17:23-30 says:

“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”

These heathen people needed to repent or change their minds about God as being the only true God (24) who is full of grace (27). They needed to repent about their many

false gods and view God correctly. They needed to have a change of mind and a whole new outlook on God's being, existence and grace.

2. *A person will have a change of mind about his own sinfulness before God (Acts 8:2; Revelation 2:21-22, 9:20-22, 16:11).*

In these verses we also discover that repentance is linked with a person's sinful condition before God. You cannot be saved unless you change your mind or attitude about your own rotten self. You must develop a different attitude about your sin. *There must be the exercise of the mind in regard to the sins of your life.*

This is expressed by the words of David in Psalms 51:3-4:

“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.”

This is also expressed by the words of the prodigal:

Luke 15:18

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.”

A person must recognize that he is a terrible sinner before God's presence and unworthy of His saving grace. He must have a different outlook and reversal of attitude concerning his life of sin. ***Repentance is the sinner seeing himself as he is and as God sees him.*** It's the job of the Holy Spirit to convict a lost world about their sin (John 16:8) so individuals can repent or alter their opinions of themselves and reduce the estimate of their own character before God. In genuine repentance there is a holy horror for sin and holy hatred for sin.

It has been observed that among the many thousands of English words, the three most *difficult* to repeat are “I was wrong.” And yet the sinner who is truly repentant will come to the place where he will say these three words, “I was wrong.” He must change his attitude about his sin and admit to God that He was all wrong in the manner in which he lived.

Many lost sinners take a light view of sin. In their own minds, sin is not so serious. But God's view is that sin is hideous and a stench in the nostrils of God. It separates humans from God. So a lost soul must take on a different attitude about his sin or he will never be saved. *He does not have to persuade God that he is going to give up every sin and commit his life to God all the rest of his days. In doing this he will confuse works with the free offer of God's amazing grace.* However, he must realize

the wickedness of his sins before God and understand that they are a stench in the nostrils of God. This kind of humbling attitude will promote the desire to want to forsake sin. It will not promote the desire to go out and live like the devil.

True Biblical repentance will bring the sinner to the place where he will be ready to change his life even though he does not promise God that he will change his life in order to be saved. In coming to Jesus for salvation, the lost sinner recognizes his need for a change, and by God's grace he will be changed after his salvation. In the act of repentance, there is a new attitude about sin. There will be the desire to leave sin and not remain in sin. This is why there is no need to impose upon a sinner demands to forsake every known sin and commit their entire life to God. This frontloads and backloads works onto the Gospel message and creates a repentance that is more than just an inward turning from sin. It argues for the fruits of repentance that follow in the Christian life and makes these fruits to be part of the root of repentance that brings salvation to the sinner. It also turns repentance into reformation! Beware!

Repentance is a whole new inward attitude or change of mind about a person's sinful condition and plight before God. *A person must come to the realization that he is utterly sinful and detestable in God's sight as a sinner.* He must alter the opinion of himself and see himself as an unworthy and rotten sinner who is fit for a burning hell. Romans 3:20 and Luke 15:17-18 explains how a man will experience a "knowledge" about his own sin before God and be deeply burdened by the very fact of his sin before God.

This certainly goes against the grain of human nature and the modern teaching of self-esteem, which personifies man as valuable in God's sight and Jesus as dying for worthy people. It has gotten so bad that certain men are saying that we should never call any person a sinner, because we will damage his self-esteem or worth. God help us! Do you realize that a person will go to hell unless he repents or changes his mind and attitude about his dreadful sinfulness before God! The Holy Spirit is seeking to convict lost people and alter the sinner's good opinion of himself. A lost person must come down to his level and see himself as a worthless and hopeless cause before a God who is full of grace and mercy.

We have multitudes of unrepentant sinners sitting in church pews today who think that they are pretty good and that God will accept them in spite of their little misfortunes in life or their little faults. I've got news for you, God will damn your soul into an eternal hell if you do not change your whole mind and attitude about your condition before God.

Repentance involves a person waking up to the fact that he is totally corrupt before God's presence and that he is totally unrighteous in His sight. *Repentance is the deathblow to self-esteem, psychology and the whole concept that man is rather*

fantastic and marvelous in God's sight. Man is a dreadfully lost sinner in God's sight and needs to wake up to this truth and change his mind about his sinful plight before God before he can ever be saved.

**Repentance is a person's recognition of his need for God's saving grace!
Repentance simply paves the way for a person to receive the offer of free grace.**

I once heard a man talking on Christian radio. He said that he never realized that he was a sinner until after he was saved. My immediate reaction to that statement is that this man could not be saved unless he first repented of his sin and realized that he was a dreadful and despicable sinner before God's presence. Self-judgment (not self-concept) is the work of repentance taking place in the heart of a person.

3. A person will have a change of mind about his own human works (Hebrews 6:1).

Hebrews 6:1 says:

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God."

The Hebrew believers were reminded about the "dead works" of the Mosaic Law by which no person could ever be saved. These no doubt have reference to the blood of bulls and goats that could not take away sin or impart spiritual life (see 9:13-14). Repentance in the Old Testament was centered on the Old Covenant of blood ("dead works"). Repentance today is centered on the New Covenant of blood – the shed blood of Christ.

The tendency was to try and gain God's favor through continuing to sacrifice the Old Testament animals. The sacrificial law, when viewed in this way, was like a bunch of "dead works" that were incapable of bringing salvation into a person's life. This then is a call for the people to change their minds about their confidence in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament to save them. The people needed to change their whole way of thinking about the blood of bulls and goats or the "dead works" of the past.

The application of all of this for today would be that a person must repent of his legalistic works within his own life, those works which they are trusting in and depending upon for salvation. Many people today are trusting in their own human sacrifices to bring salvation into their lives. *As a general rule, mankind is of the opinion that works save a person.* This false theory is instilled in the minds of multitudes today. Modern man believes that if he lives well enough and jumps high enough that God will save him in the end. Many people have the concept that God is grading on a curve and that they will make it to Heaven because their good works outweigh their bad works. But God says that all of our works are "**dead works**" when it comes to saving us. Like

the rituals of the Old Testament sacrifices, our works have no life or ability to save or rescue us. That is why we need to repent of these works. We need to come to the place where we have a new mindset and attitude (change of mind) about our own works in life. We must agree with what the Bible says about them. They are dead and filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). *We need to repent about our own efforts to save ourselves and develop a new spiritual attitude and outlook toward the only way to be saved.* This brings me to the next point:

4. *A person will have a change of mind about the person and work of Jesus Christ as the only answer for his salvation (Acts 2:38).*

The context of Acts 2:38 would indicate that the Jewish audience needed to have a change of mind and heart about who Jesus Christ really was (22-24,36). He was the true Messiah and God that they had crucified. These people needed to repent of their failure to see Christ as God and their need for His salvation. They needed to have a new change of heart about Jesus Christ the Messiah. They needed to see Him as God and the only Savior of their souls, who alone could forgive their sins and make them right before God (36,38).

Until a person is ready to change his mind about who Jesus Christ is (God) and what He can do for him (save his lost soul), he cannot be saved. That is why Jesus was so adamant about His own person (Mark 8:27; John 8:24) and work upon the cross (John 3:36). Repentance precedes faith in God's saving program. Unless an individual experiences a real change of mind about God, Jesus Christ and his own sinfulness, which separates him from God, he cannot and will not be saved. Repentance will bring a man to his knees so that he realizes that God's way is right and his sinful way is wrong. He will realize that his ship is sinking and he is in it. He will also agree that Christ is the only answer for his salvation.

There is also a separate element connected with repentance that is *emotional*. This means that there will be a certain moving of the soul and sorrow over the sin that occurs in one's life before he repents in a Biblical sense. As we will see, sorrow works in connection with repentance, but is not repentance in and of itself.

Lehman Strauss has said:

"We are not saved by our feelings, but neither do our feelings remain dead and senseless when we are saved."

Dr. Harry Ironside has said:

"The very first evidence of awakening grace is *dissatisfaction* with one's self and self-effort and a *longing* for deliverance from the chains of sin that have bound the soul."

One poet said:

“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream,
All the fitness He requireth
Is to *feel your need* of Him.
This He gives you,
Tis the Spirit’s rising beam.”

When a person truly repents he will change his mind because his heart has already been stirred and troubled about his sin. *This means that there is not only a change of mind but also a change of heart or emotional response that must first occur when someone truly repents.*

Matthew 21:28-29 says:

“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 (grieved), and **went**.”

Matthew 21:32

“For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented (grieved) not afterward, that ye might believe him.”

The word repent in these verses is the Greek word “metamelomai” which means “to care afterwards, to regret or feel remorseful.” *It points to the remorseful and heartfelt conviction that precedes repentance.* I like to view this aspect of grief as the seed or spawning ground for repentance to take place. In our present verses (28-29), we have both the seed of repentance (“grief”) and the fruit of repentance (“went”). *Both the seed and the fruit are the before and after of repentance.* They themselves do not make up what the Bible defines as repentance (“a change of mind”), but they do precede and follow Biblical repentance. In other words, what precedes and comes after is not the actual root or core of repentance. **Grief** simply prepares for repentance to take place, and **fruit** comes after repentance has occurred. *In between the seed and the fruit is where real repentance occurs, which involves a change of mind.* If a person will make this distinction he will be saved from much confusion.

The primary Greek word translated repentance means to have a change of mind or new attitude about God, Jesus Christ, your own sin and your need for salvation. *Grief is the seed that germinates this repentance, and fruit is the result that comes after this repentance. “Grief” (sorrow) and “fruit” (a change of life) are not the actual repentance, but the two cooperate with repentance and cannot be separated from its design and outcome.* That is why when a person repents about his sin there is a certain sorrow

connected with the fact that he is a sinner before God's presence. Grief or sorrow has paved the way for repentance to occur and continues to affect his heart as he repents before God. This is also why a change of life follows repentance

There needs to be a genuine change in a person's emotional response when he recognizes how sinful and terrible he is in God's sight. When the lights come on and the bad news about his condition before God is known, the man's heart will become crushed. It will become deeply burdened down by the weight of sin and produce real grief and sadness in his life.

Acts 2:37-38 says:

"Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

As Peter was preaching to the lost Jews who had crucified the Lord, they suddenly realized their enormous sin. Their crime came bursting upon their hearts and they realized the terrible position in which they stood. The Bible says that they were "pricked in their heart." This means that their hearts went through an emotional change. The blackness of their own sin crushed their hearts and stirred them to take action. What kind of action did they take? The action of repenting of their sin in order to be saved and become a part of the New Testament church.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 7:10:

"For godly sorrow (grief) worketh repentance (change of mind) to salvation not to be repented (regretted) of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

There are different degrees of sorrow in different people. However, the Bible seems to teach that there must be enough sorrow that leads to genuine repentance, where one's whole mind and attitude are changed about his sin. This in return will result in the "salvation" or deliverance from sin. The emotional element in repentance may not always be seen outwardly. There may not be a single tear shed outwardly. However, if the tears do not flow down the cheeks, they will surely flow within the heart. *Sorrow works in direct connection with repentance.* It's sorrow working with repentance that makes repenting more than just an intellectual encounter with sin. It makes repentance a time of heartfelt mourning and sadness.

James 4:9 speaks of this grief aspect tied to repentance:

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness."

This is what precedes (though not part) of true Biblical repentance. There will be a certain element of sorrow over sin and remorse for what you have done and how you are living. When people claim to be repentant but express no remorse or regret for the way that they are living, they have not repented. The reason is because God makes the heart sorrowful through inner conviction before repentance can occur. It's only after repentance is complete that the sorrow that works in connection with repentance can be turned into joy!

My favorite verse in the Bible is Isaiah 51:11. It gives a promise to those who truly repent. After repentance occurs, sorrow will be turned into joy. "Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; *and* sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

Second Corinthians 7:9 states the same truth about this sorrow that works in connection with repentance. "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing."

In other words, a person's heart must be stirred and grieved about his sinful condition before God. This can then lead to a change in the individual's mind and heart and give him an entirely new outlook on his life. He will realize that he is a sinful soul before God and worthy of His judgment. This in return will result in a change of life from his sinful past. This is true concerning the Christian who repents and with the unsaved individual who repents unto salvation. *The change will occur after genuine repentance has already occurred in the heart.*

In this passage, sorrow is viewed as something separate from repentance, something that precedes repentance. Some have concluded by this that sorrow itself has nothing to do with repentance and can be misleading when we try to link sorrow with repentance. However, that would do an injustice to those passages which closely link sorrow and mourning with the act of repentance (Psalms 51:1-2; 2 Cor. 7:9-19; James 4:9; Zach.12:10; Matt. 24:30) .

What the Bible seems to suggest both here and elsewhere is that sorrow is the seed or spawning ground of repentance. Sorrow is the spawning ground for repentance to be born within the heart. As we have already stated, there is both the seed of repentance (grief or sorrow) and the fruit of repentance (change of life). What Paul is suggesting in Corinthians is that *there is a sorrow that precedes repentance and will lead to genuine repentance, which is a change of mind and attitude about a person's life of sin and separation from God.* One leads into the other. There is a change of heart that results in a change of mind about your sin and condition before

God. Unless you have a response of remorse and sorrow toward your sin (change of heart) you will never have genuine inward repentance (change of mind).

Grief, or sorrow, leads to repentance and you cannot have real repentance without the heart first being stirred and moved about sin. In fact, the actual order of the Greek in verse 10 reads, “grief repentance to salvation works”. This actually suggests that grief is tied to repentance and is needful in spawning real repentance. It is separate and yet a needful starting point for repentance to occur. To regret or have grief after a “godly manner” (9), “godly sorrow” (10) and “godly sort” (11) means that a person will experience grief over the actual sins that he has committed in life. This grief or sorrow results from the inner conviction of God and is thus called godly sorrow. *The person convicted and grieved about his sin realizes that God is speaking to him, and so he changes his mind (repents) and takes sides with God against himself and against his sin.* The ultimate result is that he receives “deliverance” from his sins and experiences a new change of life.

Conviction and stirring of the heart (change of heart) always precedes a change of mind. **God must first touch the heart before He can touch the mind, attitude and life of a person.** There is a true stirring of the heart and sorrow attached with repentance that cannot be overlooked. One leads into the other. On the other hand, the “sorrow of the world” (2 Cor. 7:10) is not godly remorse that leads to genuine repentance or that sorrow which causes a person to change his mind about sin. Worldly sorrow or grief means that a person will be sorry for the consequences that his sins have brought into his life. He will have regret for what he must reap because of his sins. *The person with the sorrow of the world is not sorry for his actual sins, which he has committed, but for the adverse results that are brought into his life because of those sins. He is also grieved because he may have been caught in his sin instead of getting away with his own fleshly way.* In other words, if the sinner’s sin was never discovered and there was no possibility of his sin being publicized and punished, he probably would not be sorry for it.

The flip side of the emotional element working with and along side or repentance is that *there can also be a very real tendency to have a deep emotional stir that never does lead to genuine repentance.* Regret itself may not necessarily lead into repentance. Once again, we must wave the red flag in order to arouse our attention and send a word of caution. Not all tears lead to genuine repentance! You can shed tears that fill three buckets and truly not be repentant.

There is a difference between *attrition* and *contrition*. **Attrition** does not lead to Biblical repentance. Attrition is when a person fears God’s judgment and intellectually believes in a God who will save him. He may shed tears of fear about judgment but not tears of sorrow over his sin and horrible state before a holy God. Attrition does not produce real repentance.

Contrition, on the other hand, does produce true Biblical repentance. This is a deep sense of sorrow and remorse, which comes from a person's awareness of his own sinful condition before God. This is the kind of heart that leads to true Biblical repentance. **Contrition is the seed from which repentance grows.**

David is the perfect example of someone who had a genuine sorrow for the sin that he committed in God's sight. His sorrow was coupled with genuine repentance. In Psalm 51:17 he says: "The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Judas, on the other hand, is a prime example of a remorseful person who did not have genuine sorrow. Judas was not sorry about the results, which his sin brought to the Lord Jesus. He was remorseful because of the terrible harvest, which he himself reaped from his sin. He was also sorry that he was caught in the act of sin. His sorrow did not grow into true repentance.

Matthew 27:3 says:

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders."

You will notice several things about this repentance of Judas. First, it was only after Judas saw that he was in the frying pan that he repented. Second, the Bible says that he repented himself and not to God for salvation. Third, the word for repentance in this verse is "metamellomai", which means to regret or have grief. *Judas did not express genuine repentance or change his mind about his actions and life, rather, he regretted that he was in such a predicament and that he had to face his sin head on.* Fourth, Judas went out and committed suicide and died. Second Corinthians 7:10 says "the sorrow of the world worketh death." Such was the case in the life of Judas.

Remember Esau? The Bible says that Esau was emotionally stirred because he had lost the birthright blessing. What does the Bible say about him?

Hebrews 12:17 says:

"For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Esau was not weeping about his sin of giving up the birthright for the gratification of one meal. He wasn't weeping about his sin at all. *He was weeping because he was a loser!* He tried to get his father to change his mind (repent) about the whole account, but it was too late. All the tears of Esau were deceptive and manipulative. They were designed to express grief for the loss of something and the desire to get it back. There was no grief over his actual sin.

They have a name for these kinds of tears. They are called crocodile tears! They are not tears that are created because of a person's deep awareness of his own sin before God. Rather, they are tears that flow down the cheeks because of remorse over one's predicament in life and his own hardships, which sin has caused him. The child, fearing the paddle, cries, "I'm sorry, please don't spank me!" Of course the child is sorry many times because he is going to get an old fashioned whipping. That is why he is crying crocodile tears.

"It is not thy tears of repentance or prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul:
On Him then, who shed it thou mayest at once
Thy weight of iniquities roll."

I think this should send a word of warning to us about great emotional appeals today, where people are stirred up, and they shed tears over saddening stories and plays or dramas. Many people have emotional responses to flashy displays and programs, but never really repent and place faith in Christ. The Gospel is not made clear, and everything is merely an emotional appeal for people to make some kind of change in their lives or take some kind of action. **Many people who were deeply stirred, filled with alarm, and moved to tears, are now in hell!** The reason is because they never possessed a godly sorrow or conviction over sin, which brought true repentance into their hearts. They merely had an emotional stir over something, which they saw or were asked to do.

Now what is the real issue at hand? Lordship Salvation teachers stress that repentance for salvation is actually when the sinner changes his life and decides to follow Christ by surrendering his whole life to God. In other words, they stress that repentance is when a person turns from his sin and changes his lifestyle. *They promote the false conclusion that every sin in the sinner's life must be forsaken before he can come to Christ and be saved.* Only then can the person really be saved and know that he is saved.

This concept teaches that the repentance, which leads to salvation, is really a matter of reformation. You should start waving another red flag when someone starts relating repentance to the act of reformation. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Repentance and reformation are not the same thing. Reformation is that attempt to do something in order to change your life. It involves a definite act to quit something within your life and refine your life in order for God to accept you or be pleased with your life. When one interprets repentance as meaning reformation, he begins to stress a works salvation or disciple/mastery salvation, which is nothing more than works in disguise!

*The problem is that the Lordship Salvation teachers are confusing the root of repentance with the fruit of repentance. **You cannot have the fruit before the root!** In other words, the Bible teaches that genuine repentance for salvation is a change of heart, mind and attitude about God, Jesus Christ, salvation and your sinful self. This is what is actually needed to bring salvation into a person's life. Change is not the root or core teaching about repentance. *Having to outwardly turn from your sin is not real repentance either.* Many imply that repentance is actually a change in one's conduct or life, whereby a person must give up all of his sins and change his life in order to be saved. It's the old evangelistic "turn or burn" idea. But is it really true? If we must actually turn away from all of our sins in order to be saved, then would we ever really be saved, and could we ever have the assurance that we are saved?*

Let me say it in even a clearer fashion. *Biblical repentance does not imply a change of a person's conduct or the alteration of one's lifestyle. Biblical repentance in and of itself does not require a change in conduct or action.* The change in conduct and action are the **results** of Biblical repentance. A change of life is what follows repentance. The Bible calls the change of life or that which follows repentance – "fruit."

Matthew 3:8 says:

"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

The fruit speak of the change in direction and manner of living that should occur after Biblical repentance has occurred. Fruit is the only fitting result that can flow out of genuine repentance. *Repentance itself is not the fruit, but that which follows repentance is the fruit.*

Acts 26:20 says:

"But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

Once again we see that works, fruit or a change of life is what follows repentance. The outcome of all genuine repentance is a change in direction. There will be the actual turning from sin and change in the course of one's life. *Now remember, this is the result of repentance.*

Both the Old and New Testament echo this same truth about what occurs after genuine repentance has taken place. The change of life is the result or what follows repentance. This is true for all repentance, whether it is repentance within the Christian life or repentance for the lost sinner who needs salvation.

Ezekiel 18:30 says:

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”

Ezekiel 14:6 also says:

“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; *Repent, and turn yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.”

Revelation 2:5

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

In all these verses we see that a change of life is closely linked with repentance. This is because the actual forsaking of sin occurs after genuine repentance has occurred. Only after a man has changed his mind and attitude about God, sin and the Savior, can he really be saved and change his manner of conduct or living. **We must then conclude that repentance itself is not a change in behavior but a change in your belief system.** This means that repentance is a change in our minds and thinking about our sinful lives, about Christ and the true way of salvation as opposed to our works and about God in general.

God does not require the fruit or result of repentance as part of His actual saving program. The fruit or results of repentance follow salvation after repentance has actually occurred. The classic illustration of repentance in the Bible proves this simple point.

Matthew 21:28-46

“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, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not.”

Here we see that after genuine repentance there will be change within a person's life. There is going to be a change in the course of a person's life. This is the fruit or result of repentance. One changed and another did not, which demonstrates that one did not have real repentance in the first place. One had fruit, but the other did not. **What many people are doing today is confusing the root with the fruit!** This is where the real confusion lies.

John R. Stott has said:

“Repentance involves a change of attitude, direction *and behavior*” (emphasis mine).

Like all Reformed writers, Stott makes fruit or change an essential part of repentance instead of that which flows out of repentance. He wants to make the fruit part of the root. Lordship Salvation teachers are claiming that one must repent (change his life) in order to become a Christian. He must forsake all known sin and promise to follow God all the days of his life or he has not repented and will not be saved. *He has confused the fruit of repentance with the root of repentance.*

A distinction must be maintained between Biblical repentance within the heart and the actual outworking of that repentance.

As we have discussed already, the Lordship teachers confuse saving faith with the fruit or change of life that follows faith. In a similar fashion, the Reformed writers place the root of repentance (a change of attitude toward God, sin, works and salvation) which leads to salvation, with the fruit of repentance that follows salvation. They construe the two together and make the fruit part of the root. This leads to confusion. As we will see in our next point, they confuse the repentance and faith, which leads to salvation, with everyday sanctification or holy living.

Any gardener knows that you must first plant the seed before you get the root. Then from the root or out of the root comes a vegetable that is full of life, color and taste. So it is with repentance. *You have the before and after of repentance.* You have the seed (godly sorrow), which comes before any repentance can occur, then you have the root or main system being born (repentance – an inner change of mind and attitude). After this the fruit or vegetable follows (the change of life). *Between these two (the seed and fruit) is the root or birth of what real repentance is all about.* It is the root, which is the core of repentance. The fruit is what follows.

In his commentary on Luke 3:8, Lenski has rightly observed:

“...repentance cannot be meant by “fruits”...” Fruits indicate an organic connection between themselves and repentance just as the tree brings forth the fruit that is peculiar to its nature...(repentance) is invisible; hence we judge its presence by the ...(fruits), which are visible.”

This is a good scriptural observation. Lenski is saying that the fruit of repentance can be seen as the resulting act of repentance. Furthermore, we can judge that genuine repentance has occurred when a person practices the resulting fruit, which flows from a repentant heart. *The fruit of repentance is not to be viewed as part of the root but a direct result of the root of repentance.* Sometimes this root and fruit of repentance are joined together so we can see the initial act of repentance with its inevitable result. Acts 26:20 seems to place the person’s saving response to the Gospel and the result of the salvation of the sinner all in one verse.

“But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should **repent** and **turn to God**, and **do works** meet (fitting, suitable, congruous) for repentance.”

- **Repent** = change your mind about God, sin and your need for salvation through Christ.
- **Turn to God** = this speaks of conversion, where the sinner actually desires the salvation which Christ offers and willingly or voluntarily turns to God for salvation through repentance and faith.
- **Works meet (suitable or proper) for repentance** = that which follows repentance.

First Thessalonians 1:9 is a similar verse to illustrate the saving response of a person to God.

“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

- **Turned to God from idols** = conversion, the voluntary decision to turn to God for salvation through the inner act of repentance and faith.
- **To serve the living God** = the transformation or outward change that takes place after salvation or conversion. No more will they serve idols. Now they will serve God.

Please carefully note what the Scriptures are not saying and then what they are saying. The Bible does not say that these people turned from their sin to God. This would imply that they were outwardly doing something in order to gain or merit their salvation. These people did not have to try to forsake every known sin in their lives and give up all kinds of wicked idolatrous ways in order to become a Christian. *The Bible actually says that they turned to God from their sin.* Their response was toward God, who alone can bring salvation into their lives. **Outwardly forsaking idols would not save their souls, but turning to God would bring salvation into their lives.**

The outward forsaking of idols will come after their saving response to God. *Paul says that these lost sinners first of all turned to God from idols. This means that they willingly or voluntarily decided to turn to God for salvation.* And when they decided to turn to God for salvation they inwardly (in their own hearts) turned from idols. **The thought of turning from idols is included with the act of conversion because it accurately portrays a repentant heart that has changed its mind and heart about sin. Furthermore, a person will not inwardly turn to God from sin without wanting**

to outwardly change his life. People must inwardly repent to God of their sinful ways and have their hearts broken over sin. *This inward repentance or change of mind and brokenness over sin is likened to turning from idols.* There was a given point in time when these people responded to God in both repentance and faith to complete the turning act before God.

These people had an *inward desire* to no longer live in their sin before the presence of a holy God. They desired to turn to God for salvation and away from idols in their act of conversion. This means that in their own hearts their sin became despicable and horrible as they contemplated the holiness of God and His hatred toward all sin. They changed their mind and attitude about their sin in God's sight and inwardly turned away from the sin that they for so long had loved and enjoyed. These people were then saved because of their inward turning to God and their inward turning away from sin through the act of genuine heartfelt repentance. True Biblical repentance, which leads to conversion, always includes the inward desire to change and place yourself under the authority of Jesus Christ in a new living relationship. **But there is a vast difference between the inward surrender connected with repentance and the need for outward change and conformity in order to be saved.** In the repentance and subsequent conversion of these people, we see that they ultimately would turn away from their outward idolatrous sins that for so long had wrecked and ruined their lives. This outward turning was the fruit of repentance.

We must remember that this "turning to God and from sin" is really one inward act that happens simultaneously in order to bring salvation into the life. *However, we must also remember that people may seek to turn from their sin outwardly and try to reform themselves and stop without turning to God for salvation.* Lordship Salvation stresses that people must outwardly turn from their sin in order to possess real faith that saves. This is no different from a person trying to reform his life. To confuse the *root* of true repentance (the inward desire to change) with reformation (the outward change) is a dangerous matter that will breed confusion in the hearts of the lost.

I was talking to a man about salvation. I asked him if he ever really was saved. The response of this man to this question was that he made a conscious decision to never hit his wife again. According to him, his salvation was based upon his act of reformation. He simply felt it was wrong to hit his wife and his refusal to no longer strike his wife would mean that God would be pleased with him and save him. However, this man never realized the dreadfulness of his own sin before a holy God and his need to turn to God for salvation from eternal damnation. He never saw his sin as a dreadful stench in the nostrils of God. *Many want to outwardly reform their ways but not inwardly repent of their sin to God and turn to God for salvation.*

For a more detailed look at repentance and its interrelationship with faith, see the paper entitled, "Repentance" in the pastor's corner. The paper on repentance will contain this material and many more additional notes.

6. There is the confusion about sanctification.

I was reading a recent flyer that was sent to my home in the mail system. The flyer was certainly clear on what it was teaching. There could be no mistake about it. In the middle of the column was the all-important question: "What must I do to be saved?" The key words in this flyer concerning how to be saved were in bright purple words and sum up the Lordship teaching position. Repent, believe and obey. What must I do to be saved? I must repent, believe and obey the Gospel. This is a clear example of Lordship Salvation teaching. The lost sinner is required to obey in order to be saved. It might be necessary at this point in time to restate the position that the Lordship salvation teachers hold concerning salvation or the way that a person is saved and accepted before God.

The Lordship Salvation teachers promote the false conclusion that every sin in the sinner's life must be forsaken before a person can come to Christ and be saved. In summary, a person must turn his entire future life over to Jesus as Lord or Master. There must be complete submission to all the will of God before one can be saved. This is done by outwardly forsaking all of his known sin. When their sin is forsaken, only then can they receive the forgiveness of sin and salvation. Only then can their faith be real. This is the teaching of Lordship Salvation.

1. We are to become disciples in order to be saved.
2. Discipleship demands the forsaking of all our sins. It demands 100% obedience to Christ in every area of our lives.
3. Therefore, in order to be saved, we must give up all of our sins and willingly forsake every sinful thing in our lives. We must fully surrender and submit every area of our lives to Christ. We must commit our entire lives to Him and be willing to follow His will for our lives the rest of our days upon earth.

In short, Lordship Salvation is the view that a commitment to obedience must be a part of true spiritual conversion. This confusion about how a person is saved arises because of their misunderstanding about the doctrine or teaching of sanctification. *The Lordship Salvation teacher places the Christian's practical sanctification or holiness, which comes after salvation, and makes it a prerequisite for salvation.* In other words, those who teach that a person has to obey and become holy in his life in order to be forgiven of his sins and to be saved, put their trust in their own sanctification or holiness for salvation instead of God's grace. *Their own holiness or*

way of living becomes their needed part to bring salvation into their lives. This of course is nothing more than a works salvation that takes away from the grace of God in salvation. Many today are intertwining sanctification with salvation. They are confusing becoming a Christian with being a Christian.

F.R. Howe wisely observes:

“Salvation must not be confused with sanctification. Before one can ask Christ to be Lord of his life, He must have Christ, the Lord, in his life. Discipleship is one thing. Deliverance from sin’s penalty is another thing.”

The Bible teaches that there are three types of sanctification.

1. There is positional sanctification (see 1 Corinthians 1:30).

This is a sanctification or holiness that is granted to every believer because we have been set apart from sin (made holy) in God’s sight in view of our union with Christ. Because the believing sinner has been brought into a spiritual union and tie with the life of Christ, the very holiness of God the Son becomes our holiness and sanctification as well. *This then is a positional sanctification that we have before God as God sees the believing sinner through the eyes of the Son.* Before we were saved we had a position of enmity, separation and sinfulness before God that we could not get rid of. Then the Holy Spirit placed us into a living union with Jesus Christ and we are forever sanctified in God’s presence. God sees us holy in our position before Him. This sanctified position before God can never be lost because it is dependent upon the very holiness of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11; Hebrews 10:14).

2. There is progressive sanctification that comes in the Christian life (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

This is the practical day to day holiness that children of God must practice within their lives. This sanctification is when we set ourselves apart from what is morally evil and separate ourselves from anything that is unlike God. This is the daily decision to yield ourselves to God and to do His will for our lives (see Romans 6:19,22). We will never bring our practical sanctification up to the level of our perfect and positional sanctification that we have in Christ. However, we must strive to live holier lives. This progress of practical holiness will vary in every believer’s life.

D. L. Moody said:

“When I was converted, I made this mistake: I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my grasp. I thought the old things had passed away, that all things had become new, and that my old corrupt nature, the old life, was gone. But I found out, after serving Christ for a few months, that conversion was only like enlisting in the army--that there was a battle on hand.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 is actually a verse that promotes our change in position from Adam to Christ (“in Christ”). *This verse does not describe the believer’s actual practice of holy living but it describes his position or place, which he now has in Christ.* To be in Christ simply means to be a new spiritual creation by virtue of the new birth, new life and new nature given to us. *We have been brought into a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ.* Because of this new living union with Christ, the “old things” have passed away. This means that we are no longer in Adam positionally and have been delivered from our old state of slavery to sin, which we once had. *In view of our new position in Christ, we have been delivered from our old man that we used to be in Adam. This is the old unregenerate man who we used to be with our old value systems, priorities, beliefs, loves, habits, ideals, desires and plans.*

With our new position “in Christ” the Bible says that “all things” are now new. This basically means that we are no longer the unregenerate man that we used to be. We have been created into a whole new person who now has a new Master to control our lives instead of the old master of sin. Because we are in Christ, our old position in Adam as a slave to sin has been forever changed. It means that we have been created into a new man, which has been given freedom from the slavery to sin we once encountered in Adam. *We have been given new desires, outlooks priorities, beliefs, loves, habits, ideals, desires, plans and new drives to live for God.* **We have all of these new things because of our position and union with Christ.** He has given to us His very own life and we are no longer the unregenerate person who we used to be.

Please do not think for a moment that when the Bible says that old things are passed away that you will have no more evil tendencies within you. The Bible clearly teaches that you still maintain the old Adamic nature that you always had after you become a Christian. However, we can now apply the effects of this position of new birth and nature to our everyday lives so that practical holiness or sanctification can be brought into our lives. This verse is not teaching that everything in our present everyday lives (“all”) will automatically become different after we are saved. “In Christ” all of these things are true because Christ has made us into a new man or person free from the slavery of sin. Unfortunately “in me” not all of this is yet true (Romans 7:18-20). *Not everything in our own practical day to day lives has become perfectly new.* However, because we have been born again and given a new nature in Christ, we can now live differently and progress in our spiritual walk, making our position or union with Christ applicable to our lives. Paul speaks about our old position being done away with and receiving our new position or creation.

Romans 6:6 says:

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin (sin-possessed body) might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

The old person who we used to be in Adam has been crucified or put to death. *Paul is not talking about our old nature being put to death but our old unregenerate person being put to death.* I have died as a person who is enslaved to sin. The old man or person that I used to be has died because of my union and position in Christ. We are no longer a slave to the sin nature because we have been given the resurrection power of Christ. The “body of sin” speaks about the human body that is controlled by sin. *Our bodies’ relationship as the instrument of a slave to sin has been conquered or put out of business.* Through Christ we are created into a new man with new desires and Christ’s power to overcome sin’s powerful slavery. We do not have to use our bodies to sin any longer because Christ has provided victory for us in view of our union with Him.

In order to have this victory we must reckon ourselves (not our sin nature) to be dead to the power and influence of sin. This involves practical sanctification within our lives (see Romans 6:13).

Practical sanctification or holiness in the Christian life is a process that occurs over a lifetime (see Philippians 3:12; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).

Someone has said:

“At each step of the journey, the question that really matters is not whether we are a little farther along than some of our friends and neighbors, but how far we have progressed since yesterday.”

This is what progressive sanctification really is within the Christian life. It is the step by step process of becoming more like Christ. We are to be changed into His image “from glory to glory” or one phase of Christlikeness into another phase of Christlikeness (1 Corinthians 3:18). The term “glory” speaks of the beauty, splendor and magnificence of Christ’s person. Thus, the believer is to progressively pass through various stages in his journey of life where he is being slowly transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Oswald Chambers used to ask:

“Are we prepared for what sanctification will do? It will cost an intense narrowing of all our interests on earth and an immense broadening of our interest in God.”

3. There is perfect sanctification when we receive a new body (1 Corinthians 1:8).

This sanctification will occur in our own personal lives when Christ returns and gives to us a new body that is without the sin nature and without any possibility for sin. This is a future sanctification or holiness that we will receive at Christ’s coming (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2). Only when our bodies are redeemed from sin itself can we ever be perfectly sanctified in our personal lives.

Without making these clear distinctions concerning different types of sanctification, you will be sailing in an endless sea of theological confusion. A person must see which context the word or concept of sanctification occurs. Only then can you figure out which type of sanctification is being discussed. The area of confusion that sparks the debate in the Lordship Salvation issue is the area of practical sanctification in the Christian life. **Lordship Salvation advocates try to say that sanctification needs to be part of the saving process, where a person promises to live in a holy fashion before God and seeks to forsake every known sin.** They promote a distorted idea of salvation by mixing practical sanctification into the Gospel presentation.

As stated already:

“Many are confusing becoming a Christian with being a Christian.”

Practical sanctification deals with the Christian life of holiness after a person is saved. It has nothing to do with becoming a Christian. *The simple answer to the whole Lordship issue is that salvation and living a life of discipleship are two distinct matters.* A person cannot become a true disciple of the Lord until the life of God indwells him and begins to change him.

“You cannot change what you do until you change who you are.”

In other words, you must first *become* a Christian by believing the Gospel (Acts 16:31), and then you can start *behaving* like a Christian. When Christ comes into your life He can give you a new nature and new power to live a life of dedication to Him (2 Peter 1:3-4). There can be no sanctification or discipleship within your life without the indwelling power and nature of God. Dead sinners cannot obey the living God; they must first be born again and receive God’s life and nature. That’s why Jesus said in John 3:7, “Ye must be born again.”

You must first receive new life in order to be able to live the new life!

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.”

The Bible teaches that the works of discipleship actually follow regeneration and are not to be construed as being part of regeneration.

Ephesians 2:10

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Please remember:

“Do not confuse the results of salvation (works and obedience) and make them the requirements for salvation.”

The Lordship Salvation teachers are mixing together the condition for salvation (belief alone) with the consequences (results or effects) that are to follow salvation. In other words, instead of seeing only belief as the requirement for salvation, they are also tacking on the requirements of holy living which are to be the results or evident consequences that follow salvation.

It never ceases to amaze me how many people today are mixing together doctrines that should be separated and distinct. **Lordship Salvation teachers also mix together the doctrine of justification and practical sanctification.**

J. C. Ryle, an English churchman of the 19th century said this about justification and personal sanctification: “Both are to be found in the same persons. Those who are justified are always sanctified, and those who are sanctified are always justified. God has joined them together, and they cannot be put asunder.

“Both begin at the same time. The moment a person begins to be a justified person, he also begins to be a sanctified person. He may not feel it, but it is a fact.”

“Both are alike necessary to salvation. No one ever reached heaven without a renewed heart as well as forgiveness, without the Spirit’s grace as well as the blood of Christ, without a meetness for eternal glory as well as a title. The one is just as necessary as the other.”

Listen to what John MacArthur has said on this matter in the Gospel According to the Apostles: “There is no gap between justification and sanctification.”

The Calvinist Donald Grey Barnhouse said:

“Justification and sanctification are as inseparable as a torso and a head. You can’t have one without the other. God does not give “gratuitous righteousness” apart from newness of life. While justification, in its action, has nothing to do with sanctification, it does not follow that sanctification is not necessary. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). Holiness starts where justification finishes, and if holiness does not start, **we have the right to suspect that justification never started** either.”

Here is the problem. The root (our position in Christ) is being confused with the fruit (our holiness in life) once again. *The position is being mixed with the practice of that position to such a point that the position becomes interlocked with the practice and the practice is necessary in order to make the position true.* By the way, Barnhouse spoke

of justification as never starting as though to imply that justification is part of a long process of searching for works or holiness in order to see if you are truly justified. Justification is the legal declaration by God to declare a believing sinner righteous without the work of practical sanctification or holiness. This official declaration takes place at the time of salvation and is totally unrelated to a person's practical sanctification or holiness.

Romans 3:28 says:

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Justification is our legal declaration of righteousness before God. *Many teach that justification involves making our lives righteous instead of simply declaring us righteous.* By teaching this false assumption of justification, people are led to believe that their degree of good works and holy living (sanctification) will provide them with some degree of justification before God. This is an unscriptural misconception about justification. You cannot add anything to what God has already said He accomplished for you. *God has already justified you in His sight without law, works, discipleship or practical sanctification.* God declares you legally righteous and accepted in His presence by the perfect sacrifice of His own Son ("a man is justified by faith"). None of your own personal sacrifices of discipleship or sanctified living are needed to bring justification before God. Nothing could be plainer than this. When it comes to salvation, nothing matters but your faith in the merits of God's Son!

Romans 3:24 says,

"Being **justified freely** by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Our justification before God is provided for us as a free gift through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. This grace is seen in His redeeming blood sacrifice. No requirement to commit to Christ's mastery or become His disciple is mentioned in this clear Biblical declaration of justification. When a person receives the righteousness of God's Son through believing in Him, it's then that God declares him legally righteous in His sight. The announcement of this redeeming fact is what brings our justification before an infinite holy God. Our justification before God has nothing to do with our manner of living.

Romans 5:15-21

"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**. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the **gift of righteousness** shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came*

upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto **justification of life**. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be **made righteous**. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might **grace reign through righteousness** unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Bible teaches that the believing sinner is clothed in the perfect righteousness of God's son so that he can receive this justified position in God's sight. **Our justification before God is not some kind of bilateral agreement between God and the sinner. Actually, salvation is a unilateral agreement that God gives to man.** This great companion passage talks about our justification before God as a free gift and not a result of our discipleship and earthly performance as a servant. Imputed righteousness that results in our justification (declared righteous standing) before God comes to us as a gift, which is free to receive through faith in Christ.

Did you observe how many times our righteous standing before God is said to be a free gift that we have received and not earned? My righteous standing before God, which gives me eternal righteousness and acceptance in God's sight is not earned through my personal attempts to make Christ master of my life. It is a free gift that is given to all believing sinners. *When sin abounded in our past state of condemnation and spiritual death, it was then that the marvelous gift of God's grace did reign in the free gift of righteousness.* Was Paul's message about justification defective in some way because he failed to leave out the idea of lordship/mastery/discipleship salvation? Of course not!

Reformed theologians who teach Lordship Salvation must attempt to mix justification and practical sanctification in order to promote their doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. *This Calvinistic teaching pushes the absolute need for the Christian to persevere in his good works as an indicator of his justified position before God.* Without this unknown indicator of works, one cannot be a believer in Christ. This is why writers of this persuasion are so adamant about discipleship and holy living as the *leading indicator* that a person is saved. It's also the reason why they tend to mix justification truth (positional truth) with sanctification truth (practical holiness). However, these Biblical truths (position with practice) cannot be joined together without breeding endless confusion concerning grace, salvation and assurance of salvation.

If you add holiness or sanctification to justification, then salvation is no longer of grace. It becomes a works salvation. In addition, no person could have the absolute assurance of his salvation due to the fact that he never can be sure how many good works he must do in order to persevere to the end of his life. This teaching actually brings doubt and uncertainty to the person who is looking for real assurance of salvation. *This dangerous teaching can actually get people to look at their works as the*

way of salvation by shifting their focus away from Christ and onto their own human achievement. It may lead people into false conclusions that they are saved by good works. Reformed or Calvinistic theology breeds confusion about grace, works and assurance. *When the assurance of a person's salvation is based upon his sanctification or holiness, he will look at those works as an indicator of his salvation, instead of looking at Christ. **The basis of our assurance must be in the promises of God's Word and not in the sanctification of our lives.***

1 John 5:13 says:

"These things have I **written** unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

We can know that we have eternal life upon the basis of the written Word of God. What God has told us should be enough to settle the question forever! And what has God told us? What record or report has God given to us? He tells us in His Word that His Son possesses eternal life within Himself (vs. 11b & John 1:4; 5:26). He tells us that we have eternal life in view of our union with His only Son (1 John 5:12, 20). God says my Son is eternal life, and if you have Him in your life, you have eternal life. That's what the Bible says. What a record! What an assurance! Because we have Christ, we can know that we have eternal life. This is what the written record says, and we must believe it by faith.

What the Bible says concerning the promises of eternal life and salvation is to be the solid basis for our assurance (John 3:15-16, 3:36, 5:24, 6:47, Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). To try to use sanctification as the groundwork for assurance can very easily lead you down the legalistic pathway of trying to perform well enough so God will accept you.

Zane Hodges correctly argues this way:

"Lordship salvation cannot escape the charge that it mixes faith and works. The way it does so is succinctly stated by MacArthur: 'Obedience is the inevitable manifestation of saving faith.'"

But this is the same as saying, 'Without obedience there is no justification and no heaven.' Viewed from *that* standpoint, 'obedience' is actually a *condition* for justification and for heaven.... If heaven really cannot be attained apart from obedience to God—and this is what lordship salvation teaches—then, logically, that obedience is a *condition* for getting there."

Lordship Reformed Theology also teaches that regeneration actually precedes faith or belief. This is why they suggest that sanctification and faith can work hand in hand.

However, there is another fly in their ointment. Regeneration does not precede faith. Regeneration comes after faith.

1 John 5:1 says:

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

Jesus said in John 5:24:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life (regeneration), and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

Notice the progression – hear, then believe, then life.

Jesus said in John 6:47:

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

We see by these verses that faith precedes the new birth or regeneration. This means that the poor lost sinner has no new life to help him to submit to Christ and cleanse every area of his life before he can get saved. It would be impossible for him to be able to cleanse his life from every sin and outwardly turn his entire life over to Jesus Christ. *The message of saving grace is much different than the message of Lordship Salvation.* The message of grace says come as you are! Come as a sinner who is in desperate need of Christ alone for salvation. Come as a hopelessly condemned sinner with absolutely nothing to offer to God. Just come!

Revelation 22:17 says:

“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.”

Salvation is not given to us or promised to us through some honor system of sanctified living. Salvation is freely given to the believing sinner who comes as he is to a God who is full of absolute grace and mercy. We come to the loving outstretched arms of a God without anything to offer God on the bargain table. *We come without price, without any lifelong offers of obedience, without discipleship and without any sanctified works.* We just come to God and He saves us by His free grace through the work of His only Son.

Romans 3:24 says:

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

“**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."

Martin Luther spoke of the free nature of God's grace when he said:

"Faith holds out the hand and the sack and just lets the good be done to it. For as God is the giver who bestows such things in His love, we are the receivers who receive the gift through faith which does nothing. For it is not our doing and cannot be merited by our work. It has already been granted and given. You need only open your mouth, or rather, your heart, and keep still and let yourself be filled."

7. There is the confusion about carnality in the Christian life.

How long can a Christian live in a life of sin and really be a born again Christian? Are carnal Christians really saved? Does a Christian have to prove himself as being a genuine believer by the kind of life that he lives? These are the questions that we must answer as we go throughout this study. We would hope to think that all of us will gain a better understanding about carnality in the Christian life.

R. C. Sproul is a well-known advocate of Reformed Calvinistic teaching and says: "The second danger of the carnal teaching is that people begin to think that all that is required to be saved is a profession of faith."

At another place he says:

"... if a person manifests a life of pure and consistent carnality, he is no Christian."

Lordship Salvation teachers simply deny that there can be carnal Christians, especially carnal Christians who live in ongoing carnality. They reject the notion of carnal Christianity because it destroys their teaching about discipleship and the perseverance of the saints in good works. Their thinking is that every true believer will persevere in good works and show by his life that he is a real disciple and is truly saved. In their mind, this will in return rid the church of carnal Christians. Lordship Salvation teachers seem to think that their teaching about the holy perseverance of saints and the lifelong discipleship of saints will somehow solve the problem about carnal Christians, who don't match up to their scheme of thinking and theology. Lordship advocates teach that all people who live in carnality are lost and were never saved in the first place. But is this what the Bible really teaches?

It is true that when a person continually practices sin without bearing any fruit in his life that he is not a Christian. He lives by his own fleshly nature and is not regenerated. He does not possess the new nature to bring any new desire or inclinations to change his lifestyle of sin. This will be made clear in our study concerning this point.

In order to make our study of this subject understandable, we will look at the character of three different kinds of people.

A. The lifestyle of the unregenerate natural man

1 Corinthians 2:14 says:

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

The term rendered “natural” could be rendered the “soulish” man. It points to the unseen or immaterial part of man where the old nature can operate and perform its evil duties. The word (psuchikos) is derived from the root (psyche) which points to something that means a breath of air. It is the word used to describe the immaterial and unseen part of man that is within him. *In this verse, Paul is talking about man as he is born, man as governed by the old nature through the soul.* The soulish man is the individual who is totally governed by the evil dictates of the sin nature through his soul instead of allowing the new nature to control his soul or real life within him. The reason this man follows his natural inborn nature of sin is because he has no new nature to help govern his soul and counteract the old nature from dominating his life. This is the character of the unregenerate man. His soul is guided by the influence of the old nature and he suffers from a mental breakdown of how spiritual truth can make sense in his life (“spiritually discerned”). How very sad to realize that this type of person is shut away from the things of God! Because of this, the Scriptures clarify how this man will act and move about in life.

1 John 3:6-7 says:

“Whosoever abideth (fellowships) in him sinneth not (does not continually practice sin): whosoever sinneth (continually practices sin) hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness (continually practices righteous living) is righteous (in his everyday living), even as he (God) is righteous.”

The unsaved false teachers or Gnostics in John’s day claimed to have superior knowledge, but they certainly did not lead a superior life! *They lived a life that was degrading and unchristian in every way and showed no sign of new life within their spirit.* This was because these false teachers never were Christians in the first place. The words “sinneth” and “doeth” are in the present tense. This would seem to indicate that the child of God who claims to have an intimate knowledge and fellowship with God, like the Gnostics claimed, will not and cannot continually practice sin within his life without any sign of righteous living. The truth is that the true child of God will practice righteous acts motivated by the new nature within him and demonstrate by his righteous acts that he is God’s child. John will bear this out in the next verses.

There should be no confusion on this point. *A man cannot claim to be a Christian and be in touch with God, while at the same time go on living in sin without any fruit and righteousness seen in his life.* On the other hand, a man can practice righteous living through having the nature of God who is righteous. God is righteous and can make His own people righteous by giving them new life and a new nature. *When a person puts his walk where his talk is, it proves that he is righteous in his life.* You see, the Gnostics were claiming to live in a righteous manner on the basis of their divine revelations, which they claimed to receive from God. But let me tell you right now, what they claimed to be (righteous) was a false estimate of themselves. They were unrighteous in their living and everyone knew it. So John sends this word of warning to the saints. Listen to it closely. Not everyone who claims to have a relationship with God is genuinely born again. **Some are professors but not possessors of real regenerating life through Christ.**

Let me stress today that many people call themselves Christians but act like the devil all of their lives. This is the sure sign that they were never a born again believer in fellowship with God. I want to say something at this point, which may not be popular. **I believe many people sitting in churches today and who claim to be walking with God are going to go to hell!** Do you know why? It's because they do not have the life of God within them. It's because they sin their lives away and never possess any real change of life to indicate that they are God's children.

I'm not talking about being saved by living a good life. *I am talking about proving you are saved by living a different life!* One man said to me that he does not have to prove to anybody that he is saved. I said to him that he was wrong!

2 Corinthians 13:5 says:

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

This verse has always been in the Bible! It suggests that the person who claims to be a Christian will have to examine himself. He will have to prove to himself and ultimately to others that Jesus Christ is living within him and has passed down to him God's regenerating and changing life through the infusion of His own nature and power. *This can only be proven by a life that is lived in obedience to "the faith" or the Word of God.* **You do have to prove yourself!** The fact of the matter is this. If you fail the test or fail to live like a Christian should live by possessing a righteous lifestyle, then you will prove that you are nothing but a "reprobate." *The word reprobate means that you are disapproved or rejected from having Christ in you and are not a participant or recipient of His regenerating life.* By your life of disobedience to "the faith" (the Bible), you will demonstrate to yourself and before true believers that you are rejected or unapproved as being a child of God.

There are many people who call themselves Christians and who say that they are saved but are rejected by God. They are reprobates who have never been regenerated or placed into this life-changing union with Christ; therefore, they live like the unsaved and are unapproved by God. They are rejected because Christ is not in them! Dear friend, if Christ is not in you, then you cannot be in the faith either. The two go hand in hand. Christ within us means that Christ will be seen through our lives as we follow and obey the truth of the Word. You can never change your life and God can never approve you, unless Christ is within you. Those who teach Lordship Salvation understand that there are a vast number of people who call themselves Christians who are simply unregenerate as they always were. I must firmly agree with them on this point. **There is no change in the life of many Christians simply because they are not Christians!**

It's true, that in the very moment we trust Christ, we can know on the authority of the Bible that we have been born again and possess eternal life through the life of the Son (1 John 5:10-12). It is also true that as time goes on, we do find other evidences of the new life of the Son within us. We will have a new love for holiness, a new hatred of sin, love for the brethren, practical righteousness, obedience, and separation from the world. *There is a definite change that begins to take shape in the regenerate life of the believer.*

When there is no change or no evidenced fruit within the life of a person, we can conclude that a person is a reprobate or unbeliever who never was saved through the regenerating life of Christ. He proves that Christ is not in him and that he fails to possess His nature and character. *This type of person is a reprobate in the sense that he is unapproved and rejected on the basis of his unchanged character of life.* He did not prove himself as possessing the life of Christ by his obedience to "the faith" or the Word of God. *Unregenerate people can fool some of the people some of the time, but they cannot fool all of the people all of the time.* They prove by their consistent and daily pattern of life that they are not born again and that they do not possess the life-changing nature of God.

It may be well to note the possible signs of false profession. I think that there are three practical tests for determining the presence or absence of saving faith. First, if there is a *total callousness* toward sin in various areas of one's life *without any desire for change* or any *evidence of regret*, then the Holy Spirit is not present and the person's profession of Christ is false. This proves that no repentance has ever occurred in his heart. Biblical passages about bad fruit and not knowing Christ apply to this kind of situation (see Matthew 7:15-20). On the other hand believers can and do commit serious sin *without* ever being disqualified from eternal life. David is but one such example, and surely the denial of Peter was a serious matter. The failure of the

Corinthians to observe the Lord's table properly was so great an offense that some even died. God took them home to be with Him.

Second, while some fruit in the life may possibly be a confirming evidence of the work of the Spirit, no fruit at all is evidence of His absence and the lack of salvation. Of course false teachers come in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15) and look as if they have fruit. But this is not genuine fruit. A separate issue is how much fruit is enough to show evidence of salvation? When is the decision line crossed? Nonetheless if an individual lacks *any* evidence or overall change and spiritual fruit, one may well question whether he was genuinely saved (see 1 John 3:14-15). How can there be life when absolutely no evidence of life has ever been seen?

With all due respect, John MacArthur argues about false profession and states the matter very clear: "Again this is not to deny the obvious truth that Christians can and do fall into sin. But even in the case of the sinning believer, the Spirit will operate by producing conviction, hatred for his sin, and some kind of desire for obedience from the moment of conversion. The idea that a true believer can continue in unbroken disobedience from the moment of conversion, without ever producing *any righteous fruit whatsoever*, is foreign to Scripture."

Third, the presence of the Holy Spirit conforming a life into the likeness of Jesus Christ does indicate that a person is regenerated or born again (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). The presence of the Holy Spirit does change a person and create a new way of life to some degree. The Spirit's presence guarantees evidence of Christ's life within every redeemed individual. Of course salvation, security, and assurance rest above all else on the promises of God's Word. ***The issue is this. How can we know that a person has accepted the written record or promise of eternal life? How can we know that he has accepted Christ and believed in the promise of eternal life?*** The answer is this. He must shed forth a certain amount of fruit and change of life. He must manifest that he has eternal life (God's life) working in and through his life. Without any real change and evidence of fruit, there can be genuine repentance and faith in a person's life. Biblical principles bring this truth out.

Jesus said in 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."

Jesus also said in Matthew 7:15:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

Titus 1:16 is still in the Bible and says:

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

One lady came to me and wondered if her sister-in-law was really saved. Everybody kept seeing her smoke, drink and curse God the same way that she always did. I told her that God’s Word does argue for a change of life after a person is saved. However, a person must not change in order to be saved. God offers His grace freely to those who smoke, drink and curse. But God’s grace will not keep her in sin without any fruit for His glory (Titus 2:11-12). Just because people say the right words and go through the right motions does not mean that they are saved.

No, I am not throwing a monkey wrench into this paper by going over to the Reformed view on salvation and assurance. We must remember that free grace has nothing to do with the actions of people that follow salvation. Furthermore, we must remember that there is a difference between old sinful struggles in the new Christian life and the unbroken pattern of sin. There is a difference between struggling with sin in the Christian and sinning as an overall pattern of life without any real fruit and change. There is a difference between sinning with conviction and sinning without conviction, moving throughout life with a certain change and moving without any noticeable change or behavior over a period of time.

1 John 3:8-9 continues to say:

“He that committeth (continually practices) sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth (continually practices) from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (continually practice) sin; for his seed (new nature) remaineth in him: and he cannot sin (continually), because he is born of God.”

There is disagreement concerning what the seed refers to that is within the child of God. Some people think it refers to the Word of God, others believe the seed refers to the Holy Spirit. However, it seems much better to conclude that the seed refers to the new nature, which God has implanted within the child of God at the time of regeneration. *The context is talking about the reproduced seed or offspring of a Father through the miracle of human birth or life.*

The context talks about the new birth that is given to every believer. *This would suggest that the seed being referred to is the reproduction of the life of God the Father in our own spirit, through the infusion of Christ’s own nature and power within us.* The seed of the new nature is planted within the human spirit of every believer through the act of regeneration. *It’s through this seed of God’s own life and nature that we become the spiritual offspring of God and can now produce Christlikeness within our lives.* Our godlike nature given at birth is opposed to the old nature of the devil.

Because we have been given this seed or new life and nature, the true believer cannot continually be motivated and stirred to live in a life of sin. The true regenerated believer will not seek the cesspool of worldly living all his life and allow his life to be untouched by godliness and righteousness.

1 John 3:6 argues that abiding in Christ and fellowshiping with God produces a life of righteous living instead of a life of continual sinning.

1 John 3:8 argues that the offspring of God, who have His nature or seed, produces a life of righteous living instead of a life of continual sinning.

Something else is very important to note in 1 John 3:8: The present tense of these verbs “committeth,” “sinneth” and “commit” would seem to stress the continuation in sin without any noticeable change in conduct or life. *John is saying that the true believer who has been born again and who has received the new nature will not and cannot sin continuously as a habit of life.* The context of 1 John 3:7 indicates a continual practice in righteous living and not only one act of righteousness. *In 1 John 3:7 he is teaching that continuous righteous action is the sign of a righteous nature indwelling the person.* One must conclude that one act of righteousness in comparison to an overall lifestyle of wickedness and sin is not the sign of the new nature or seed of God dwelling within one’s life.

Therefore, we must conclude that John in verse 8 is speaking in the same frame of mind. *The point John is stressing is that this person who continually practices sin and shows no sign of change or bears no fruit in his life, cannot have the new nature or seed abiding in his life.* Because of this continual or habitual lifestyle in sin, he cannot possess the seed of the life of God within him or this new nature. The sad conclusion is that he is of the devil, meaning that he possesses the same nature of the devil and is following the driving forces behind this nature. His sinful lifestyle reflects his satanic origin. *The person who acts in the same sinful way of the devil is the offspring of the devil and has the same nature of the devil.* John uses this same analogy in his earlier book.

John 8:44

“Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Fatherhood determines practice! Let’s wake up and face the reality that many people are the offspring of the devil instead of the offspring of God, and they have the devil as their father. They possess the same nature and characteristics of the devil himself. In

fact, all of us, in our unregenerated state, before we possessed the life of God and His new nature, were considered to be the offspring of the devil.

Ephesians 2:1-3

“And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

We were by “nature” the children of the devil. And because of this evil inherited nature, we were also under the wrath of God’s judgment. We shared the nature of the devil and were under his control and bondage. The logic here is clear. If a man knows God, he will obey God; if he belongs to the devil, he will obey the devil. If we miss this truth, then we have missed what John is saying.

Martin Luther said:

“This is a wicked disjunction. Turn the matter about: ‘Dear fellow, believe in God, and then afterward, when you are reborn, are a new man, etc., do whatever comes to hand.’ The fools don’t know what faith is. They suppose it’s just a lifeless idea.... It’s impossible to be reborn of God and yet [continuously] sin, for these two things contradict each other.”

Let’s face the facts. We did not have to go to school to learn how to lie and be angry. We did not have to go to school and learn how to fight our sister or brother. We are born with a nature that is opposite of God’s character and nature. We are born and grow up to follow the nature of the devil.

Little Suzy was riding in the car with her father. She decided to stand up in the front seat. Her father commanded her to sit down and put on the seat belt, but she declined. He told her a second time, and again she refused. Dad finally said, “If you don’t sit down *immediately*, I’ll pull over to the side of the road and spank you!” And at this firm word the little girl obeyed. But in a few minutes she said quietly, “Daddy, I’m still standing up on the inside.”

It goes to show us that the devil controls our lives through the old nature, and we do what we do because of the Adamic and devilish nature within us. It is true that we possess the nature of Adam, since we have sinned in Adam. However, it is equally true that we possess the nature of the devil because it was the devil’s own nature that was produced in Adam when he sinned by allowing the devil to control his life. In one sense, the devil brought his own nature and likeness upon the human race through

Adam's sin, which has ultimately been passed down to us through Adam (Romans 5:12).

The devil is the father of many in this world instead of God! Does that surprise you today? *The lost people of this world are under the complete power and domain of the devil and follow his nature and characteristics.* This explains why the world is in the kind of moral collapse that we see today. It explains why politicians and people lie. It explains why there is such racial hatred and sinful behavior in this world today. It's all because people who are not born again possess the nature or characteristics of the devil. They live like the devil would live! They walk like the devil would walk. They talk like the devil would talk.

John is then saying that when we continually live in sin and show no signs of change or fruit within our lives, when we show no evidence that God's life or nature (seed) is within us, it's then that we are not born again or saved. The idea of 1 John 3:8 is not dealing with a single act of sin but a lifestyle of sin. When a person lives without any fruit or continuing acts of righteousness in his life, you can be sure that he possesses the same evil nature as the devil. *Sinning is not the prevailing and ultimate pattern of the believer's life.*

1 John 5:18 also says:

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not (does not continually sin); but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

The same truth is being presented in this verse as well. When a person is born again and has the new nature indwelling him, he will not continually practice a life of sinning without any evidence of fruit or change of conduct. In fact, the believer living with the new life and nature of God will keep himself from the devil's tempting snares as he claims his victory through Christ. The devil cannot touch the believer in the sense of bringing moral defeat into his life when the born again child of God claims the ground for their victory in their living union with the resurrected Christ.

*Although we should never **base** our salvation upon the way that we perform or live, there is the timeless truth that the way that we live **gives evidence** that we are saved and in a proper relationship with the Father and are His offspring. No real fruit shows that we have no root!* The problem with the Lordship Salvation teaching is that it heavily relies upon the fruits of a person's life as the sole ground for genuine faith, salvation and assurance. It's as if they are basing the whole weight of their salvation upon their own manner of living instead of looking at the merits of Christ and finding rest and assurance in Him. *In one sense, they actually base their salvation upon looking at their own lives instead of looking at the saving merits of Christ's death.* In Numbers 21:8 we are again reminded of how the children of Israel had to look at the serpent on the pole in order to be healed physically.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”

The typology is very clear. Today we must look to the Son of God upon the cross who became our own serpent of judgment in our place or stead (John 3:14-15). We must look to the cross where Jesus became our substitute for sin and where He bore our own judgment for this sin upon Himself. When we look in belief or faith to the cross, we will be healed spiritually. *Salvation and the assurance of salvation come into our lives by looking at the cross. It does not come by looking at ourselves.*

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

Saving faith and assurance does not come into our lives through the self-examination of fruitful living and good works. It does not come through analyzing our life as we walk upon some unknown path regarding our salvation. Salvation can only come through looking at Christ the Lamb of God. Lordship writers attempt to make faith linked with obedience and therefore will go to great lengths to try and get us to believe that looking involves obedience. **They are really saying that we must have faith in our faith so long as our faith is working properly.**

John MacArthur has said:

“In order to look at the snake on the bronze pole they had to drag themselves to the where they could see it.”

This is a ridiculous statement that is used to try and force more into the meaning of looking. The Old Testament text does not reveal that the people had to drag themselves to the pole in order to see it. The serpent was lifted up so that they could see it! The emphasis is only upon looking. This kind of playing with the biblical texts in order to follow a philosophical system is what one writer has called, “voodoo exegesis.”

What John is saying in his epistle is that there will be a change in the regenerate believer’s life. However, John is not advising that we base our salvation or assurance on this outward conduct. **A changed lifestyle is the sign that we are saved but it is not the security of our salvation.** John is merely stating an axiom in his epistle. There is a change in the life of a regenerate believer. God’s people are different! But John is not preaching assurance of salvation *based* upon this changed lifestyle.

In the Gospel of John he argues for salvation and assurance through belief in the message of Christ (John 3:14-16; 3:36; 4:13; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 12:36; 20:31). In John's epistle he argues for the sign of salvation through a changed conduct in life. It's important to make these distinctions. One angle (belief) brings salvation and assurance into our lives and the other angle (fruit) brings the sign of salvation upon our lives. John's Gospel deals with how to get saved and have assurance whereas John's epistle deals with the added evidence of salvation that comes into the Christian life through righteous living. How to get saved and the evidence of salvation are two distinct matters. If you want to know how to be saved and have the assurance of eternal life, then look to Christ and His promise of eternal life. If you want to have another sign or marker along the way to give you added encouragement concerning your salvation, then look to your changed life.

Do not confuse or mix the two together – how to be saved and the evidences of salvation. One will give us the absolute assurance that we have eternal life and the other will come along and give us another sign of encouragement along the pathway of our Christian lives. We can know the exact destination where we are driving to in our automobile. We can have no doubt concerning our destination. The signs along the way only give the added proof that we knew where we were going all along. The works and fruit of our lives acts as a sign or marker along the pathway to only verify that which we already knew about our destination.

I remember when I was driving down route 83 to Baltimore. I needed to take a trip to John Hopkins Hospital to see a friend. I knew where the hospital was. I had been there before. So I was just driving down the road with confidence and assurance because I knew exactly where I was going. However, along the way I came to those road markers and particular signs that informed me that Baltimore was 50 miles, 20 miles and then Baltimore was the next exit. These road markers or signs were added blessings of assurance and encouragement along my journey. They were confirmation that I was travelling in the right direction. They provided secondary assurance that I was on the right track. In a similar way, the fruits of our lives provide us with added encouragement along our Christian journey that we are saved. We know where we are going and are convinced that we are going to Heaven because of the promises of God's eternal Word. Nevertheless, the signs of fruit and change give us the secondary encouragement that we are saved and possess eternal life. They are simply road signs along the way that we can read to give us more evidence that we are saved and going to Heaven as God has promised us in His Word.

We must remember that there is a vast difference between examining the fruit and works of our lives for the basis or primary means of our assurance and examining the overall fruit and works of our lives as the resulting evidence (sign) and added confirmation or encouragement that we are saved.

Where is a person to look for the basis and assurance of his salvation? Paul the apostle answers this question for us in Romans chapter eight.

Romans 8:31-39 says:

“What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? 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? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

My friend, this is the ground of our assurance. It is in Jesus Christ alone. What is striking about all of these answers is that Paul never asks the believer to look at himself and test himself for the outward evidences of works as the Reformed theologians suggest. Rather, in answer to all of these questions, he directs the believing sinner to Christ. ***The conclusion about the believer's eternal salvation and foundation of assurance in their life is that both salvation and assurance rests completely upon the person and work of Christ.***

Romans 8:29-30

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

Dr. Charles Ryrie comments on this passage by saying:

“Nowhere does it appear in Paul's list in Romans 8:29-30. Only predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Could it be that Paul didn't want to base our guarantee of ultimate glorification on our personal sanctification? Assuredly it does not rest on that, for the many sons who will be glorified will have exhibited varying degrees of personal holiness during their lifetimes. Yet all, from the carnal to the most mature, will be glorified.”

The Calvinist or Reformed theologian can offer no real assurance. This is because their philosophy of assurance is rooted in human potential whereby he derives his assurance from his works. A person sensitive to sin will always doubt his salvation because he will realize that he never could be holy enough to please God. There will

always be this underlying doubt that he can know for sure that he is saved. Why is this? ***It's because self-examination is not Christ-examination.*** There is no way around the Lordship dilemma. ***If you base your salvation upon your life then you will be trusting in your evidences of Christian living instead of Christ's work upon the cross.***

The response that John MacArthur received after writing the "Gospel According to Jesus" should have caused a red light of warning to go off in his mind that the gospel he was preaching was not promoting assurance among God's people who earnestly wanted to know the truth. He writes about their responses:

"Almost immediately after the book was published, I began to get letters from lay readers asking for more on the subject. They wanted practical advice: *How should we explain the gospel to children? What tracts are available that present the way of salvation fully and biblically?* They wanted help understanding their own spiritual experiences: *I came to Christ as a child and didn't surrender to Him as Lord until several years later. Does that invalidate my salvation?* They wanted spiritual counsel: *I've been struggling with sin and lack of assurance for years. Can you help me understand genuine faith and how I can have it?...*"

It boils down to this. If all you look at are the evidences of works in your life to provide you with the assurance of salvation, then you will be asking yourself these questions:

- "How much evidence do I really need?"
- How much is any evidence?"
- Is my faith genuine?"
- Am I persevering, as a Christian should?"
- I'm not sure how much I must accomplish or change to really persevere?"
- Am I going to be a defector in the end?"
- Do I have enough faith in my own faith? Is it working enough so that I can know that I have true faith?"
- Am I really saved?"

Dear friend, the Bible teaches and overall examination of your life to give you an added confirmation and assurance that you are saved. It does not stress a constant examination of your performance and works in order to determine if your faith is real. It does not teach the constant practice of putting yourself to the test of salvation. This never leads to assurance. **The Bible advocates people to view their lives in a general sense in order to determine if there has been a noticeable change and shift from what they you used to be before they were saved to the way that they are now living.** It does not advocate a continual process of examination to promote assurance. **Furthermore, don't use the Scriptures that call people to examine themselves in a general way and turn them into part of the Gospel presentation.**

This is that false gospel presentation that makes discipleship part of salvation. It's the spurious gospel presentation that tells the sinner to forsake all of his sins and follow Christ all the rest of his days or else! Or else what? His faith is not real and he will go to hell! Lordship Salvation evangelists claim that God will not accept a man's faith in Christ unless he is able to give up all of his sins and can follow Christ.

Lordship advocates simply press the issue of works to such a degree that they are looking at works instead of Christ. They are trying to figure out if their faith is real by constantly examining their works and life. God's Word does not promote this type of spiritual hysteria! **A general overview of one's life is healthy. But the constant examination that Lordship Salvation teachers require and promote produces Christians that lack assurance and true faith in Christ. It also turns salvation into a game of chance and luck!**

Martin Lloyd Jones says that a "trace" or "glimmer" of works will do the job. Oh really? But what is a trace and what is a glimmer? How many glimmers must we have? You get the point. Nobody knows when they have glimmered enough or have done enough in order to know that they are regenerated. **Lordship Salvation teachers simply confuse the sign of salvation (works) and make it part of the way of salvation (faith) that brings salvation into our lives.**

It must also be noted at this time that John in his epistle makes a difference between objective assurance based upon facts or the promises of God's Word (1 John 5:11-13) and subjective assurance in our hearts which flows out of the objective assurance from the facts (1 John 5:9 – "in himself"). The inward witness of peace and rest concerning eternal life comes from the Holy Spirit only when you believe the written record that God has given to us about eternal life. When we believe the promises about eternal life which are written down as a Biblical record and witness concerning eternal life, only then can we experience the inner witness of the Holy Spirit that gives us assurance in our hearts that we are saved. This inner witness only comes when we believe the objective promise about eternal life as recorded in Scripture.

This is important to understand. Subjective assurance in the heart should never be based upon the examination of one's life. It is based upon the examination of the Scriptures and the promised record about eternal life to all who believe on Christ. Subjective assurance must always come from the Holy Spirit when you believe the promises concerning the free gift of eternal life through faith alone in Christ alone. *When you try and create your own subjective assurance by looking at your life instead of the promises of God's Word, then you will be creating your own manmade assurance and not the Spirit directed assurance that comes by believing the record that God has given to us about eternal life.*

We must not misunderstand what John is saying to us in his epistle concerning the righteous acts of believers. He is writing to the believers to verify that those who say that they are Christians, like the Gnostics claimed, but experience no outward change in their pattern of living are not born again. They are simply “if we say so” type of people (see 1 John 1:8; 2:4; 4:20). ***John is not arguing for a daily and hourly subjective self-examination of believers’ lives in order that they can determine their birthright. He is simply stating a general principle in regard to all true Christianity.*** The principle is this. Regenerate believers will live differently. Believers will manifest a change of living and demonstrate in some measure that they possess God’s new life and nature. And this outward lifestyle change gives added and secondary evidence that God’s life is abiding within them.

It’s interesting that John never says that believers can absolutely **know** that they have eternal life through their self-examination like he said in connection with the written promises of God’s Word concerning eternal life (see 1 John 5:11-13). When you believe on Christ you can know that you have eternal life based upon His written promises. When you live differently it’s because you are already a Christian. **Again, living a righteous life is simply a secondary confirmation and encouragement to the person that already believes that he has eternal life. It brings added encouragement to the mind and heart, which already has assurance.**

But Beware! If works become the basis of assurance or become necessary for assurance, then it is impossible for a person to have assurance since his life of commitment varies. On the other hand, those who claim to be born again and do not manifest any real fruit in their lives can also be sure that they are not God’s children. Regeneration always leads to some transformation in life. **Christians will in some measure and in some capacity be different than unbelievers, even if they fall into the category of carnality.** As we will investigate in our next point, *carnal Christians do not live like the unsaved all of their lives or in every area of their lives to the point that they never evidence any real or lasting fruit in their lives.* They will not act and live like unbelievers all the time even though they are primarily living in the mode of selfishness and defeat. *There will at least be an evident pull in the direction of godliness throughout various times and phases of their lives, even as carnal Christians.*

For instance, 1 John 3:14-15 says:

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

Because of our changed actions towards God’s people, we can receive secondary assurance and confirmation that we have God’s life dwelling within us. This is simply an added blessing for the true child of God. But this additional comforting confirmation of salvation for the children of God can become a sentence of death to the

unregenerate person who does not manifest any real change of life. It can become a black mark on his life.

1 John 4:20 also says:

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

1 John 3:18-19 reads:

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”

John Calvin was right when he said in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 3:19 that we must never look at our works so as to produce the primary assurance of our salvation or as he states it, “look to our works for our assurance to be firm.” John is not teaching that we must base our salvation or assurance of salvation upon a changed life. He is teaching that our changed life can be a secondary aid to our faith in Christ. Our manner of living can provide what Calvin had called “a subsidiary to its (faiths) confirmation.” **In other words, our holy and righteous lifestyle provides us with the added confirmation and assurance that we are God’s children even though we already know that we are His children based upon the written promises about eternal life through faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:26).**

2 Peter 1:10 also says:

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure (firm, stable): for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

Calvinists love this verse because they can argue for the process of lifelong examination as the sole proof for salvation or eternal life. By using this verse they can turn John’s promise of eternal life into Peter’s examination for eternal life. **Once again, we must understand that Peter is not arguing from the standpoint of how a person is saved but from the standpoint of the added confirmation or evidence of a person’s salvation along their Christian pathway.** It is worthy to note that these believers already knew about their election (1 Peter 1:1-2). Since they already knew or had the assurance that God had chosen them, now they could demonstrate the reality of this high calling by their change of living. *Their change in conduct would be a sure sign and secondary evidence that they had God’s life indwelling them.* It would become like an added sign along their journey to bring them further comfort concerning their already promised election by God. Furthermore, this change of living through the new life and nature of God would mean that they would never fall into ungodly living (2 Peter 2:10) and as a result would receive eternal reward and an “abundant” entrance into the kingdom (2 Peter 2:11).

2 Corinthians 13:5 once again reads:

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

This verse means what it says. We should examine ourselves to see whether or not we have been obedient to “the faith” or Scriptures. When we live a consistent disobedient life and show no signs of fruit in our lives, then it can be said that we are “reprobates” or disapproved or rejected by Christ and that Christ’s regenerating and transforming life does not dwell in our lives. **Once again, we must remember that this examination is not to occur in order to determine how we are saved but to verify if we are saved.** Examining our lives does not save us. Furthermore, we cannot obtain the base of our assurance by examining our lives. **Self-examination is merely an indirect means of assurance. It is an added encouragement along the way to already verify your salvation, which you know to be true through faith in Christ.**

Paul merely argues that if you have no change in your behavior patterns then you do not have Christ dwelling within your life. **The general or panoramic examination process is intended to reveal the evidence of a person’s salvation or lack thereof. It is not intended to convey how a person is actually saved.** As we have stated already, the call for examination is not given to convey the thought that people are saved and can know that they are saved by constantly examining their works on a daily basis. **However, as a general rule, self-examination or a collective overview of one’s overall life can prove to be helpful in reconfirming something that you already know. A collective and general examination of a person’s life can be healthy. It can bring added reconfirmation that you are saved because you have placed genuine faith in Christ alone for salvation.** On the other hand, it can bring the ultimate bad news when revealing that you are not born again since you have no drive and determination whatsoever to live for God and follow His Word.

Remember three things:

- **Do not confuse the way of salvation with the sign of salvation!**
- **Assurance comes through examining the promises of God’ Word.**
- **Reconfirmation and added encouragement come through a general overview or examination of one’s overall pattern of living.**

There are also other groups (Arminian), which teach that eternal security provides us with a license to sin. In other words, if we believe that God’s eternal life dwells within us and we are eternally secure through the life of Christ, then this means that we will want to go out and live as we please and serve the devil. **Rather than being an excuse for the Christian to go out and sin, Christ’s internal seed and security is a guarantee that the Christian will not go on sinning.** He cannot sin habitually because he has been born of God and has the new nature abiding within his life (1

John 3:9). *This new life and new nature within provides us with a new attitude, which is against sin and a new desire to live for God instead of the devil.* That is why we no longer will be completely controlled and dominated by the nature of the devil.

The question naturally arises at this point, “When does sin become habitual? How often does a person have to commit sin in order for sin to become a characteristic behavior and prove that they are not born again?” How much rebellion and disobedience must one have in their lives to know whether or not that they are saved? I must be honest with you. John does not answer this question for us. Rather, he puts each person on guard, and leaves the burden of proof on the person himself. However, we can be sure that a person, who has a pattern of sin and goes on in sin without any fruit resulting from their repentance, does not possess true repentance or regenerating life. The life of the eternal Son within does not produce a life of continual sin and ungodliness. There is no room for argument on this point. Those who teach Lordship Salvation will not dispute this point either. **The problem arises when we make examination the ground of our saving faith in Christ and the sole support for our assurance and ultimately the basis of our salvation.** This is what Reformed writers do as they stress the perseverance of saints in good works as the sole determining factor of one’s salvation and assurance.

Some Reformed writers will attempt to reason that the works that a believer does are not works because it is actually God working in them to do these works (Phil. 2:13). Therefore, since God is doing these works through the believer, then they cannot be considered works but part of the faith process that God implanted within the elect. In other words, if God is doing it, then these works cannot be man’s works. This type of reasoning is insanity! *God does work in our lives to accomplish His will but when we bank our eternal destiny on what God does through our lives, we are still guilty of trusting in the works way instead of the grace way.* We turn God’s wonderful working within our lives into a legalistic endeavor to gain salvation and merit before God. **In reality, we are saying that Christ will save us through the works that He is doing in our lives instead of the works that He has done on the cross!**

All of these passages of Scripture that ask us to examine ourselves and investigate our lives are given to reaffirm the wonderful promise that we already are to claim – the promise of eternal life through faith alone in Christ alone. When our life experiences no change in manner or conduct then we must assume that our faith was never rooted in Christ and that Christ does not indwell our life.

B. The lifestyle of the regenerate carnal man

The carnal Christian is a believer in Christ who has been born again or regenerated. Paul tells us that these people were in Christ positionally (1 Corinthians 1:2). By faith,

they had been positionally sanctified and washed clean of all of their sins and justified in God's eyes.

1 Corinthians 6:11 says:

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

As far as their salvation was concerned, these people were regenerated believers. However, Paul says that while the Corinthians were regenerate believers, they were persistently disobedient to Christ in their day-to-day living. This is why he calls them carnal, which means to live in a fleshly manner. In chapter three the Greek word in the received text for carnal is “sarkikos” which simply means pertaining to the flesh or made of flesh. It comes from the Greek word for flesh which is “sarx.” The word carnal should be understood as meaning “made of flesh” or “fleshly.” This explains what the life of the carnal man is all about. The carnal man is a man who is controlled or dominated by the flesh.

The doctrinal term for flesh as used in Scripture refers the old nature that we have inherited from Adam. The Greek word “sarkinos” would then refer to man as controlled by the old nature or man under the domination of the Adamic nature. The proper way to understand the word “carnal” is to relate it to the man who is under the influence and power of the old nature within his life. *The carnal man is the fleshly man. He is the man who acts under the influence and energy of the sin nature.*

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3:

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto **carnal**, even as unto **babes** in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are **yet carnal**: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and **walk as men?**”

John MacArthur refuses to accept the reality of a class of Christians who are consistently carnal in their lives. He writes to defend the historic Calvinistic Lordship Salvation view: “Paul’s words to the Corinthians ‘Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?’ were not meant to establish a special class of Christianity. These were not people living in static disobedience. Paul does not suggest that carnality and rebellion were the rule in their lives.”

This is an erroneous conclusion in light of the other two classes of people that are represented in this context, which are the natural man and the spiritual man. *Paul clearly says that the Corinthians were living in a continual mode of carnality even though they possessed the many gifts.* Using gifts is no sign of spirituality and faithfulness to God. The carnal man is that person who is knowingly disobedient to

Christ and the Bible in his overall manner of living and conduct. His ears are closed to the life-changing truth of the Bible; therefore, he remains a spiritual infant or baby. He is that person who walks like the unsaved world in many ways. He is the person who bears little fruit in his life and experiences more defeats than victories within his day-to-day living. Selfishness dictates his life and the power of the old nature controls his life in a large measure. He is the Christian who has developed a pattern of rebellion and defeat in his life.

This definition will help us to understand what a carnal Christian really is. *Paul is not talking about occasional lapses of sin within these peoples' lives.* The chapter is dealing with a developed and deep-seated pattern that was existing in the lives of these people. Paul informs these saints that they are “**yet carnal**” or that they are still persisting in this type of lifestyle. Their carnality had been a settled part of their lives for a long time. *The fact of the matter is this. The carnal Corinthian believers were persistently living like the unsaved world around them (“walk as men”).* We cannot escape this conclusion if we read the Bible and simply believe it as being true. It is only the fanciful Reformed dream of perseverance that believes there is no class of people in the Scripture called “carnal” who persist in their fleshly living. As we have already seen, Scripture verifies that these people and many others did not persevere in active holiness and fruitful living.

The Lordship Salvation teachers do recognize that the Bible talks about carnality in the Christian life but at the same time want to minimize the possibility of ongoing carnality in the Christian life. They attempt to explain this carnality in the lives of the Corinthians as something that was merely sporadic and not dominating in their lives. The context argues for a deep-seated lifestyle of carnality and not a momentary lapse of carnal living (“**ye are yet carnal**”). *Genuine believers can live carnal lives and represent the carnal way of life.*

Paul had taught in Corinth for a year and a half and was now sending a letter after three more years of absence. He is dealing with the lives of Christians who were persistent in their manner of living over a long period of time. They had not grown in their Christian lives. Instead, they resorted to carnality and stayed there. They were unlike Christ in their attitudes and spirit toward each other. Their lives were dominated by a pattern of sinful living or behavior. Their defeats far outweighed their victories and fruitfulness within their lives. They were carnal in their basic manner of living and lifestyle. The fact of the matter is this. The Corinthians lived in an ongoing state of carnality without any consistent victorious spirituality.

When seeking to define the carnal Christian, we must distinguish between certain acts of carnality and the consistent behavior patterns of carnal living.

We all commit carnal acts of sin within our Christian lives. Every marriage partner will verify that this is true of his or her partner. And all the ladies said, "Amen." And all the men said, "Amen." We are not without sin! There are no super saints reading this paper. There are victorious saints and spiritual saints, but there are not super saints who have completely overcome the old nature in practice and possess perfect victory over the sin nature without exception.

1 John 1:8 says:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

James 3:2 says:

"For in many things we offend all."

James reminds us that no person, no matter how committed or spiritual, is exempt from sin. The sin bug bites all of us throughout our lives. However, if a person can control his tongue, he is considered to be well rounded and disciplined and mature in the Christian life. When the tongue is under control, that person will be less prone to stumble in life. Nonetheless, we all do stumble and sin, and every sin that we commit is carnal or fleshly in nature. This means that it comes from the old nature residing within us. *However, this normal struggle with sin does not necessarily qualify us as a carnal Christian by definition.* For instance, the Bible says that we are all constantly at war with the old nature. There is a battle raging within our lives as the Holy Spirit and the flesh seek to overthrow one another. This is the normal Christian life.

Galatians 5:17 says:

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

We must understand that certain carnal acts of sin and carnal defeats in the Christian life may not develop into a pattern of ongoing carnality and defeat. However, we must remember that sin can very easily start to overtake our lives and consistently rule over our lives if we are not careful. *We can fall into the mold of the carnal Christian life if we become negligent.* We can find ourselves gliding through life in a very unspiritual manner. We must all examine our lives today and see if we have been living in a rather consistent state of defeat and sin within our lives. If we honestly investigate our lives and conclude that we suffer many defeats and few victories over sin within our Christian walk, then we must be categorized as a carnal Christian.

The carnal Christian is the person who establishes a pattern of defeat and sin in his life. He is a Christian who is consistently being overcome by sin as he struggles with the old nature. His victories over sin are minimal. *The carnal Christian is experiencing more than momentary defections into sin within his Christian life. He has developed a pattern of rebellion and defeat in his life by rebelling against what God actually wants*

him to do. By definition, the carnal Christian life is the life lived in consistent defeat. It is the type of Christian life where the believer lives in a predominately selfish manner, allowing sin to rule and reign within his life.

You are not necessarily labeled a carnal Christian when you momentarily give into the sin nature within the normal battle of the Christian life. We all commit certain carnal acts of sin within our lives. However, you actually become marked as a carnal Christian when you allow sin to continually master your life and control you on a consistent regular basis. *When you develop a pattern of consistent carnal acts, you can begin to understand that you are predominately carnal within your life.* I am carnal when I record more defeats than victories. I am carnal when I consistently choose to go my own way instead of God's way. I am carnal when I do not gain control over stubborn worldly sins and am continually overtaken by them. I am carnal when I bear little fruit in my life and fail to consistently walk in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. I am carnal when I am stubbornly following my own sinful patterns in life and resisting God's call to change my life. I am carnal when I am not surrendering my life to God's plan and will. I am carnal when I am indifferent to the Word of God. All of these are marks of the carnal Christian life.

What are the differences between the carnal Christian and the unsaved or natural man? This is at the heart of the issue that we are discussing. I think we can assume from the Scriptural standpoint that there are two differences between the lifestyle of the carnal Christian and the unsaved man.

➤ **The carnal Christian will always bear some fruit within his life.**

Although there are many similarities between the unsaved natural man and the carnal man ("walk as men" – 1 Cor. 3:3), there are some distinctions between these two men. Making these distinctions will let us know that the carnal Christian is truly saved in spite of his carnality. One matter about the carnal Christian is that they will always bear some fruit within their Christian life. Some illogically conclude that carnal Christians will never bear any fruit of any kind throughout their lives. This simply is not true. ***Even when a person lives a carnal lifestyle, it does not mean that he will never show signs of spiritual life within his manner of conduct.*** We must remember that every person will have something that God can praise him about in connection with the way that he has lived his life here on earth (see 1 Cor. 4:5).

Dr. Ryrie has said this concerning the carnal Christian man:

"But somewhere, sometime and somehow, he will also do some thing(s) that will merit Christ's praise."

Carnal Christians do not live like the unsaved all of their lives or in every area of their lives to the point that they never evidence any real or lasting fruit in their lives. They will

not act and live like unbelievers all the time even though they are primarily living in the mode of selfishness and defeat. There will at least be an evident pull in the direction of godliness throughout various times and phases of their lives, even as carnal Christians. We must remember this about the carnal Christian. Just because a carnal person never really commits his life to Christ, does not mean that he will never do anything honorable for God. He will accomplish certain spiritual acts to demonstrate that he is regenerated in his life. There will be some spiritual things in his life which do demonstrate that he is a believer. In other words, all believers will bear some fruit in their lives. However, this fruit will vary in each person and may be very small in the life of the truly carnal believer. God simply uses what we give to Him.

Matthew 13:8 says:

“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”

Although the lifestyle of the carnal believer is predominately like the unsaved (1Cor. 3:3), there will be a certain amount of fruit within his life. This fruit will be evidenced that others might see God working in his life even in a small fashion. The carnal Christian is like the believer in John 15 who would only bear a little “fruit” instead of “more fruit” and “much fruit” (see John 15:2, 5,8). You will notice that those branches, which do not bear any fruit, are taken away and burned (vs. 6). Jesus suggests by this picture that people who do not bear any real fruit for God are unsaved and will eventually be taken away into judgment. This is what happened to Judas Iscariot (John 13:13-18).

We must also remember to distinguish between genuine fruit and what I call outward fizz. ***Genuine fruit is always the result of genuine life.*** Let me explain what I mean by looking at the Scripture.

Matthew 13:23 says:

“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

There is however, another type of superficial fizz or excitement that seems to be fruit, but in the end was only temporary zeal that does not last.

Matthew 13:20-21 says:

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon **with joy** receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but **dureth for a while**: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”

This type of person has an emotional conversion to Christ and seems to be going on all eight spiritual cylinders. Then, all of a sudden, he is found far away from Christ living his own life again. This tells us that what was witnessed within his life was not fruit but fizz. It was a temporary display of excitement and zeal, which was generated from the flesh and not the Spirit. In short, it was man's own fleshly froth and not the fruit of the Spirit that comes from God's divine life.

We should always be careful not to mistake a man's own work for Christian fruit. Do not confuse man made fizz with fruit! We must remember that a man's inward God-given conscience can compel him to do good and wonderful acts of humanity (Romans 2:13-15). There is a God-given conscience that compels all people from birth to do what is right and good. Because of this inward conscience people can do good deeds and acts of kindness. But these acts are not real fruit generated from the spiritual life. They are merely fizz along the pathway of life. However, we discover in the Scriptures that every believer will indeed bear some real fruit in his life. *If a person is truly saved, whether spiritual or carnal, he will always bear a certain amount of fruit. No genuine believer will fail to bear fruit. We just cannot be sure how much and how visible and how long he will bear this fruit of Christlikeness and good works.*

➤ **The carnal Christian will be saved at the end of his life.**

This will not be the case with the unbeliever. The carnal Christian does not persevere in his Christian life in a victorious way as we can see by these disciplinary verses. And yet, he will certainly be saved in the end of his life even after living a defeated and dismal Christian journey.

1 Corinthians 5:5 says:

"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Here is a brother who was actually disciplined through the agency of Satan because of his consistent carnal living. His carnality was so bad that Paul needed to do something about it. He was living in sin with his stepmother. Because of this, Paul exercised his apostolic authority and officially exercised church discipline upon this man by throwing him out into the arena of the satanic world. This seems to suggest that the protective hand of God was removed from this man's life for a short time (Job 1:12). The reason for this special delivering act was so Satan might inflict him in some measure and make him weary of running away from the Lord. *It's interesting to realize that even Satan can bring true Christian people back to God. God can even use Satan for His own purposes.*

It's also interesting to realize that Satan can destroy the body (sarx) of a Christian under God's approval. The construction, which reads "destruction of the flesh," refers

to a judgment that comes upon the body of this sinning brother. *Satan may have control over our bodies under God's permission, but Satan has no power over the spirits of believers.* When Satan attacked Job, he was only allowed to harm this man of God physically. He could destroy his possessions and afflict his body, but he could not destroy his soul. The inner believer belongs entirely to Christ and we have the absolute assurance that he will **be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus**. This obviously means that this man's spirit will not be lost when Jesus returns. His spirit will return with Christ and be reunited with his body in order to dwell with Christ for eternity. The carnal man does not lose his spirit in eternal judgment like the unsaved man does (Revelation 20:14). The carnal man's human spirit will remain regenerated forever. But in the meanwhile, the unrepentant believer on this earth may be bodily turned over to suffer greatly at the hands of Satan.

Although the carnal man may predominately live like the unregenerate natural man, there will still be marks of genuine fruit within his life. *The flicker of God's life will be seen within his life.* Carnal Christians do not overcome in their practical day to day living, as other believers. Because of this, Jesus promises that there will be a different measure of reward and privilege to reign with Him in the coming kingdom. There will be those who are rewarded *as an overcomer* in the coming kingdom day in that they will be allotted a measurable rulership with Christ. But carnal believers will not rule and reign with Christ in the same measure as those spiritual believers who overcome in their daily routine of life here upon earth.

Revelation 2:26 once again says:

“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.”

The Biblical reality that not every person will rule in the same measure would indicate that carnality in the Christian life will hinder the believer's privilege to reign with Christ in some measure. It will effect their future reign with the Lord. Every believer has overcome in Christ (“he that overcometh” - see 1 John 5:4-5). They have been given a new regenerated life within their spirit so that they will evidence God's life in their own walk to come degree. However, the degree that we practice our overcoming position in Christ in this life (“keepeth my works unto the end”) will result in a certain measure of reigning privilege with Christ. Paul also warned the carnal Corinthians about their loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 says:

“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

The very fact that there will be loss of reward at the Bema Seat of Christ suggests the Biblical truth about the carnal Christian life. Carnality in the life of certain believers will keep them from receiving a full reward. *Carnality within this present life will mean the loss of reward in the next life.* This is reward which otherwise the carnal believer could have had if he would have changed the course of his living. Carnality in the Christian life keeps people from earning reward. What we sow, we will reap in connection with the reward and blessing of eternal life (Galatians 6:7-8). *If we sow to our own carnal living, then we will reap an empty harvest for eternity.* We will be “saved, so as by fire” – 1 Cor. 3:15. This means that we will pass through the fire of God’s judgment and have most of our works burned up. Our dish will only have a few remaining crumbs left in it. Everything else will have been eaten away by God’s righteous judgment.

For a detailed look at the life of the carnal man, please see the paper entitled, “The carnal Man.” There are many additional notes covering this important study.

8. There is the confusion about discipleship.

Most of the Reformed writers who embrace the Lordship Salvation view will rely heavily on a passage of scripture where Jesus presents discipleship to a rich man before he was saved (Luke 18). They seem to suggest that this proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that discipleship is an inseparable part of the Gospel theme and a needed requirement for salvation.

Before looking at Luke 18 in some detail, I would like to give you a summary study of why Jesus presented the ministry of discipleship to the lost crowds of people that He came in contact with during His earthly ministry. As we are going to see, Jesus did not promote discipleship as being part of saving faith or salvation. In this study we will see that Jesus presented discipleship to promote the idea of fulfillment and satisfaction in this life and in the future life. He also promoted discipleship to a lost man to demonstrate how sinful he was before God and how he needed salvation through the Messiah. This short study should provide a satisfactory answer as to why Jesus presented discipleship to people while on earth. Here are some seed thoughts that I will share with you at this time.

I. Why Did Jesus Present Discipleship to the Lost Masses?

There are three reasons why Christ presented the message of discipleship to people.

A. To teach dedication to His cause.

Jesus presented the credentials of discipleship to His true personal followers to teach them the importance of dedication to His cause (Matt. 16:21-27; Luke 9:23; 14:25-27).

Not everyone who embraces Christ as Savior is a dedicated disciple or strict follower of Christ in the radical way presented by Christ (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!”

Jesus linked reward with faithful discipleship.

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.”

The message of discipleship does not involve the issue of “Where you will spend eternity” but the issue of “What you will have in eternity!”

B. To warn about the danger of false profession.

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! 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 (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 (John 6:64 – “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).

C. To direct people to Christ.

Jesus said in Luke 18:18-22:

“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.”

Please note that Jesus did not ask this man to follow Him in order to bring salvation into his life. This would contradict what He told another man named Nicodemus (John 3:3,7). Jesus did not say that this man could receive salvation and the promise of Heaven when he gives away his whole life savings. Rather, Jesus said that he could have treasure (reward) in Heaven. The term “inherit” was a word that often portrayed the desire of an individual to receive reward and honor in the future life of the messianic kingdom. So Jesus tells this man that he cannot receive any reward in the future life because he loved his riches more than he loved the Messiah and His offer of salvation. Without receiving the salvation and the mercy of God (Luke 18:13), there can be no future inheritance of eternal life for this man.

Thus, Jesus is saying that in order to have a future inheritance of reward this man must sell everything that he has. This man must become a disciple and follow the Lord. The problem was this. The rich man could not become a disciple of the Lord because he was a covetous man unwilling to give up his riches. This scenario proved that he was not saved. *This man’s unwillingness and inability to follow the Lord was a sign that he was a sinner in need of the saving grace of the Lord. The point is this. This man could not gain an inheritance or eternal reward because he did not have eternal life!* His response to what Jesus had said proves this to be true.

Jesus addressed the rich ruler concerning his need to give up his riches. But do you see what Jesus was really doing? He was hitting the nail on the head. He was actually using the law in a lawful way in order to prove that this man did not keep all the commandments of God in His earthly life as he had claimed. He was covetous! “Thou

shalt not covet.” **Jesus confirmed the truth that people could have part in the future life or become saved and accepted before God through their own efforts to follow Him by keeping the commandments of God.** This man was lacking in his performance of discipleship and was not willing to repent about his covetous heart. This proved that he was not willing to be saved and lay up treasure for eternal life.

When the lost rich ruler found out that he was covetous, he was sad (vs.23). The reason this man became sad was not because he had discovered about his own covetousness. The reason he became sad was because he did not want to give up his riches to inherit the blessings associated with eternal life! *Therefore, because this man was covetous, he could not meet Christ’s vigorous requirements for discipleship. This whole offer of discipleship was designed to prove that this man was a sinner in need of the Messiah’s saving grace.* This man lacked one thing – he was a covetous man. Because of his covetous life he could not become a disciple of the Lord and inherit eternal reward. In fact, Jesus set up this discipleship scenario to prove that he did not have salvation or eternal life. Thus, this man needed to see that he was unrepentant before God and in desperate need of His salvation. **This whole scenario was designed to demonstrate to this man that he lacked what was needed for salvation and acceptance before God. He could not have part in the future life of the kingdom because he was not right before God.**

The rich man said he had a clean record of following the law before God. Therefore, Jesus had to show to Him that his record was not so clean and demonstrate that his lack of perfection before God would keep him from the future blessings associated with eternal life. The rich man thought eternal life could be earned or merited. But Jesus proves that it cannot be earned or merited because every person lacks perfection before God. Every person has broken God’s law. Thus, Jesus concludes by saying that this rich man lacked one thing (he was covetous) and because of this he could not be right before God and enter into the blessings of eternal life. **The fact of the matter is this. We all lack what is needed for salvation and acceptance before God.** We are all sinners and must come to this realization before the Messiah or Savior can save us, even as Jesus had just illustrated earlier (Luke 18:9-14). This rich man needed to come to Christ as the publican came before God. He came crying for mercy instead of claiming to be righteous in his own manner of life and conduct.

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.”

Did Jesus actually mean by this statement that people must sell all their possessions in order to be saved? The answer is “no,” even as we see in the account of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus only gave half of all that he had to the poor and not everything (Luke 19:8). After doing this, Jesus said that salvation came to Zacchaeus (19:9). Zacchaeus was

not saved by giving up half his riches. Nor would he have been saved if he had given up all of his riches. *This man was already saved in order to have a change of heart like this.* That is why Jesus pronounced salvation upon the house of this man (see Luke 19:9). He saw the change of heart and knew that Zacchaeus had become a spiritual “son of Abraham” through faith and not by actually giving up his riches.

Galatians 3:7 says:

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”

The matter of *giving up* riches or anything else for that matter is not the issue in salvation. The issue is this. We are sinners and need the Savior! **Sin, the Savior and salvation are the issues facing the lost person today.** The issues of salvation do not revolve around giving up riches, smoking, tobacco, or any other sin. We must come to God realizing our own imperfection and our inability to be what God wants us to be. We must come to Christ realizing that we have broken God’s law and are horrible sinners in His sight incapable of pleasing Him.

This is the intent of these passages. They are designed to get man’s eyes off of his own human achievements and get them onto Christ alone for salvation and eternal life. They are designed to demonstrate that man cannot do something in order to gain or merit eternal life. A man must turn to Christ admitting his own sinfulness before God and utter failure to meet God’s requirement of perfect obedience and holiness before His faultless presence. Thus, man must turn to the mercy of the Lord alone for salvation and eternal life.

We must understand that Jesus sometimes spoke in hyperbole to prove a point. The point was well made in the case of the rich man in Luke 18. *Who has ever really given over everything to Jesus so that they could gain eternal life?* The answer is “No one.” **Within this incident in Luke 18:18-22, Jesus actually proved how man’s futile attempts to follow Christ by keeping His commandments could never save him and bring to him the promise of eternal life. This is because every person has fallen short of doing what is absolutely right as Romans 3:23 concludes (“For all have sinned” & “Yet lackest thou one thing”).**

Alas, we always lack one more thing! Therefore, the whole argument that discipleship (following, surrender and obedience to Christ’s commands) as an actual requirement for salvation crumbles. Jesus is actually teaching the exact opposite! **God is actually saying that I don’t want your discipleship when it comes to eternal life. No amount of discipleship or obedience under law can bring salvation into your life.** The reason is this. We are all lawbreakers and need His mercy. **Jesus was trying to get the rich man to admit his unrighteousness and realize his need for help outside of Himself and ability to follow Christ. This is something that the religious Pharisee could not see in the temple (see Luke 18:9-14).**

Like this rich ruler, being able to have what we want deceives us into thinking that we have no needs, even spiritual needs. Many people who have wealth actually believe that God is always smiling upon them and blessing their lives. They say, "God has blessed me. He is already on my side. He must be pleased with me already." Therefore, they think that they have no need for salvation.

This is why Jesus said in Luke 18:25:

"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."

The key point to remember is this: *When a person promises to follow Christ in order to be saved, he is actually placing some form of works on the altar as his requirement to become a Christian and receive eternal life. On the other hand, when a person places his total faith in Christ to save him, no promise or requirement is given to God.* Therefore, Jesus did not ask people to follow Him or become His disciple during His earthly ministry in order to bring salvation into their lives. **Jesus addressed lost humanity in this manner ("follow me") so that they might see how sinful they actually were in light of the law and realize their own inability to follow Christ as a way of acceptance and salvation.** The rich man could not follow Christ as a way of salvation because he was unwilling to give up His riches and repent of his covetous way of life. This inability to do so actually became the indication to this lost man that he could not be saved by following Christ. It would be an impossibility to him. This is because he loved his riches and was not willing to face up to his own sin of covetousness.

People must learn to come to Christ in the manner of the old saying:

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the 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."

In the case of the rich man, Jesus brought up the commandments of the Old Testament Law in order to try and convince this man of his own sinfulness before God. Jesus was using the law in a lawful manner and for its intended purpose, which is to convict a sinner of his own sinfulness before God. He said, "Thou knowest the commandments..." *Jesus did not tell him to go do the commandments of God.* Jesus was actually using the law in order to teach the young man that He was a sinner and in need of the Savior.

1 Timothy 1:8-9 says:

“But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.”

In dealing with this rich man, Jesus offered the credentials of discipleship to demonstrate how sinful and lost this man really was and how he desperately needed salvation. Jesus spoke about discipleship to this particular man in order to convey that people are not able to inherit eternal life and reward in the kingdom by following the Old Testament law. No man could follow Him perfectly so as to inherit eternal life in the messianic age. There could be no entrance into this future life because of a man’s works or earthly accomplishments, which will be termed as “many wonderful works” at his kingdom arrival to earth - Matthew 7:21-23).

You will remember that Jesus said a man must become as a little child to enter the kingdom. This means that he must express faith in the Messiah and become totally dependent upon Him for salvation even as the little children illustrated by jumping in the lap of Jesus during his earthly ministry (Matthew 18:2-3). Man must realize that he is a sinner and needs the new birth (God’s life) in order to enter the messianic kingdom of the future (John 3:1-5). *You enter the kingdom by new birth and not by meritorious obedience to the law.* The law condemns the sinner so that he will not inherit the earthly messianic kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) but God saves the poor lost sinner by cleansing him of all his sins (1 Cor. 6:11) so that he can enter this glorious kingdom economy in the future (Matthew 13:43).

The whole issue of this passage revolves around faith in the Savior. It does not center on giving up material possessions in order to have salvation. *Christ simply told this rich man to sell all that he had because he loved his riches more than salvation.* **Christ wanted the man to see that he could not follow Christ in order to be saved because he was covetous and had broken the law.** *Christ wanted this man to understand that he was trusting in his riches instead of Christ for salvation.*

1 Timothy 6:17 says:

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”

The point seems to be that whatever stands in the way of a person accepting Christ, as his Savior must be dealt with by repentance. Whatever a person is trusting in for salvation must be faced with a new change of mind and attitude. If anything like love for riches hinders a person from trusting in Christ, he must repent of it in order to be able to trust in Him alone for salvation. Jesus revealed that this man’s

heart was not willing to trust in Him alone for salvation since he loved and trusted in his riches more than Christ.

Jesus echoed this same truth in another passage of Scripture as He applies the passage to the unsaved in a secondary sense:

Matthew 5:29-30 says:

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

In other words, if any sin hinders you from trusting Christ, then repent or change your heart about it, so you can trust in Christ alone for salvation. The disciples needed to watch their actions in order to gain eternal reward in the kingdom (Mark 9:41-49). However, in the same breath, Jesus reminds us that the unbeliever is not to allow anything to keep them from trusting in Christ alone for salvation. **The main point Jesus was making was not outward mutilation of body parts, but the inward repentance and mutilation of the heart of man.**

Obviously Jesus was not teaching physical mutilation, for a blind man could have as much of a problem with lust as a person who has sight, and a man with only one hand might use the one hand that he has to sin. *It seems that Jesus was primarily advocating the removal of the inward cause of offense.* Since a lustful heart would ultimately lead to adultery (28), one must repent about his inward sin and his heart must be changed. It must be regenerated through repentance and faith in Christ. Only a changed heart can bring forth changed thoughts and living patterns. Of course, the Pharisees' hearts needed this inward change. It is true that only by this inward repentance and change of heart (regeneration), can one escape hell (“Gehenna”) and the bodily sufferings connected with this eternal place of judgment.

So Jesus spoke to the unsaved crowds about following Him in order to convey to them their own personal inability to do so and reveal to them about their desperate need to repent of their sins and trust in Christ alone for salvation. Jesus wanted people to see how terribly lost they were in their own sin and how desperately they needed to trust only in Him for salvation. He wanted them to see their need for salvation outside themselves. They needed to understand that their measure of discipleship would never save them.

When witnessing to many people today, we discover that they have the same mindset as this rich young ruler. *They actually believe that they can be saved by some measure of discipleship.* If they will just live a certain way and follow the Golden Rule, then they

will be okay. God will accept them. **What good thing must I do or can I do in order to inherit eternal life?** This is the same question that faces many people today. They want to do or attempt to follow Christ in order to bring salvation into their lives. In a similar way, we need to be like Jesus and present the law before people so that they will see how dreadfully sinful they are before God and cease from attempting to follow Christ as a way of salvation. We need to share with them about their pressing need to repent of their sins and only trust in Christ for salvation.

So what is the real problem? *The real problem is that Lordship Salvation teachers always equate salvation with discipleship.* They are trying to mix the two together. *They are attempting to put the cart before the horse.* You cannot have discipleship (the cart) without first possessing genuine salvation (the horse). ***In the Great Commission, Jesus clearly recognized that discipleship follows salvation.***

Mark 16:15

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach** the gospel to every creature.”

In another Great Commission passage Jesus spoke about what the disciples needed to do with those who respond to the message of the Gospel in faith.

Matthew 28:19-20

“Go ye therefore, and teach (**disciple**) all nations, **baptizing** them (those who are regenerated) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **Teaching them** to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”

The Bible commands other believers to make disciples of the new converts of Christ. *This involves the two important activities of baptism and teaching.* Baptism was one of the clearest New Testament proofs that a person had already accepted Christ as Savior and was now willing to identify with the Christian group, the church. But more importantly baptism signified the person’s willingness to follow Christ and live for Him. It was not entered into lightly or unadvisedly as it often is today. Those who were baptized were identifying themselves with both the church and demonstrating their desire to follow Christ and sacrifice their lives for Christ. The new converts were also taught how to follow Christ and live holy lives for Him. They were taught how to sacrifice and surrender their lives for Christ even as the original disciples were taught. They needed to pass this truth down to those who were getting saved.

Baptism and teaching are the two areas that involve discipleship. Never could they become part of salvation. You cannot believe on Christ and be baptized at the same time. Likewise, you cannot be taught truth for the Christian life at the same time you believe on Christ for salvation. *They are two separate acts.*

Dr. Ryrie has correctly observed:

“But learning and obeying are not prerequisites for believing, they are products of believing.”

The understandable order that Jesus was giving was to preach the Gospel to the lost and see them come to Christ for salvation. Following their conversion to Christ, you must then introduce them to the ordinance of baptism, which pictures their desire to live for the Lord and be His follower. You must also teach them the importance of discipleship and how to be a true follower of Christ after they are converted. Lordship Salvation advocates attempt to make discipleship part of saving faith and the Gospel presentation when Jesus says it come after the presentation of the Gospel and the person's faith.

Note: To preach that discipleship is part of the actual Gospel message would also mean that we must preach that baptism is part of the Gospel message and true saving faith. This is simply erroneous.

A “disciple” (Luke 14:26) is really a learner, one who attaches himself or herself to a teacher in order to learn a trade or a subject. Perhaps our nearest modern equivalent is “apprentice,” one who learns by watching and by doing. A disciple is a learner or student. The term is applied to those who give devotion and obedience to Christ. The word *disciple* was the most common name for the followers of Jesus Christ and is used 264 times in the Gospels and the Book of Acts. *It's interesting to note that the word disciple does not appear outside the Gospels and the book of Acts.*

In the day of Jesus there were disciples who literally followed Him around the countryside and gave up their occupations to do so. After the death and resurrection of Christ, this aspect of discipleship was impossible. Therefore, the word became less used in the book of Acts and not at all in the epistles. However, in the great commission we are called upon to make disciples of young converts. This would mean that we must teach others what Jesus said about discipleship so that they, in return, might become followers of Christ as well. *The nonexistence of the word disciple in the epistles does not mean that we are not to make disciples today. The principle application and true significance of what Jesus was teaching about all discipleship remains intact.*

During the earthly ministry of *Jesus Christ, He spoke about the clear need for a true disciple to follow Him in a certain way that these people were doing as they literally followed Him across the countryside.* If people truly want to commit themselves to Christ and follow Him, there needs to be a certain kind of earthly commitment and following. There was a necessary stipulation placed upon every true disciple. As the people could visually see, a follower of Christ would literally follow Christ around the

countryside and listen to His words and teachings. However, we must understand that Jesus used this illustration of people following Him in order to convey a far deeper spiritual truth, a much deeper lesson than merely following His tracks around the countryside. For instance, the poor widow and Mary, who poured the ointment on Jesus' feet, certainly sacrificed their all for Christ, without necessarily following Christ everywhere He went (Mark 12:42; John 12:3). **What Jesus was really saying is that a true disciple will forsake everything that stands in the way of loving Christ and following Christ and giving Him first place within his heart and life. This is true sacrifice.**

Jesus was not implying that a person must literally follow Christ around and be His shadow in order to become a true disciple or follower of Christ. If that were the case, then none of us could meet the requirements for real discipleship, since Jesus is no longer walking upon this earth.

What Jesus was implying was something far deeper. He was declaring that a true disciple must follow Him in a *similar way* that His own earthly disciples followed Him. In what way or fashion did His original earthly disciples follow Christ?

Luke 18:28

"Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee."

The disciples were willing to forsake all ("left all") those things that hindered them from following the Lord as He roamed the countryside. They gave their whole lives to Jesus. This is the same thing that Jesus said.

Luke 14:33

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

What Christ was teaching by the example of those who followed Him around the countryside was that *an individual must follow Christ above his own personal desires, goals, ambitions, sinful desires and own selfish plans in life.* **Disciples should be willing to sacrificially forsake all those things that stand in the way of their spiritual dedication to Christ and their spiritual progress.** The crowning mark of real discipleship is forsaking all those things that get in the way of our ability to really follow the will and word of Jesus for our lives. However, we must remember that discipleship is always what follows salvation. It is not to be construed as being part of the Gospel message and part of our faith in Christ and salvation. I must reiterate once again for clarity:

Once again: "Do not confuse becoming a Christian with being a Christian."

You become a Christian through simple repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (see Luke 24:47). Then and only then can you become the kind of disciple that God wants you to be. **Do not put the cart before the horse, discipleship before salvation!**

The conditions for becoming a disciple (Luke 14:25-27,33) are different from those for becoming a Christian (John 3:16). We are justified freely (Rom. 3:24) before God “without cost” (Rev. 22:17). But to become a disciple, something in addition to faith is needed: works. If we are “justified freely,” how can the enormous costs of being a disciple be imposed as a condition of that justification before God?

The disciples were commanded to go and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15), and then they were told to disciple the new converts (Matthew 28:19-20). *Discipleship and dedication to Christ follows salvation.* I cannot understand why so many people have missed the clear teaching of Christ on this matter.

“You cannot change what you do until you change who you are.”

“We cannot live the life until first we possess it.”

The capacity to be able to live a life of dedication and discipleship is not possible until after we are born again. As Peter stated it, only when we are saved and possess new life do we receive the “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). **The sinner comes to the Savior like a beggar, unable to offer to God the right kind of submission and dedication.** Therefore, he must be born again and receive the life-changing power of God before he can offer God discipleship and truly live for Him.

Lewis Sperry Chafer has written:

“Confusion and contradiction arise when *these later life-responsibilities* are allowed to enter as a part of the human requirements of salvation. By such teachers it is claimed that man is saved by the power of God through faith, provided he continues by good works to adorn the doctrine which he professes ...”

He goes on to say: “That salvation from its beginning to its end is all a work of God in response to saving faith uncomplicated by any form of human merit, virtue or works ... Too often this essential feature of salvation is acknowledged as a theory and then, for want of due consideration or consistency, such human requirements are imposed on the unsaved as the condition of their salvation and deny the fundamental truth that salvation is by faith alone.”

Of course, those who teach what they call Classic Reformation Theology will say that a person is actually regenerated before he can possess faith in Christ. Therefore, he already has the new life in order to become a disciple or follower of Christ when he exhibits faith in Christ. And the claim is that the “faith which works” is given by God

after regeneration. Therefore, faith or post-conversion works are not meritorious works. Once again, these teachers have the cart before the horse. *The Bible clearly teaches that a person believes to be regenerated and not vice versa.* He does not become regenerated in order to be able to believe.

1 John 5:4 says:

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith.*”

The understanding of this verse is significant. A person must first believe in order to be an overcoming born again believer in Christ. Don't reverse the order as Reformation Theology teaches. A person is not born again (regenerated) so that he can in return believe and overcome the world. This teaching does not square up with the Scripture. It was the teaching of Augustine and the Reformers but not the teaching of the Word of God. We do know that when a person is born again, he overcomes the satanic blindness and darkness of the world through the regenerating life of Christ. This can only occur when they first exhibit faith in Christ. Faith is the vehicle that brings a person into this overcoming or victorious position over the world. Initial belief in Christ is the way that a person becomes born again and is then brought into an overcoming position in Christ. *Faith is the **vehicle** that brings the victory into our lives. Regeneration and overcoming victory is the **result** that comes from faith.*

It's unsound theology to make regeneration a prerequisite of faith. The Bible is very clear about the right order.

Acts 16:31 says:

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

John 5:24

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

Genuine faith in Christ always results in regeneration or this everlasting spiritual life. **Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Faith does not come by regeneration.** This is very easy to understand as you read the Scriptures and study them at face value. When you try to follow the pattern of Calvin, Luther, Whitfield and other Reformers on this subject, you will not be following the order of the Scriptures. The Reformers fought about the free will of man and could only conclude logically that man's will can be free only after Christ regenerates that will. Only then can a person believe on Christ. This simply does not square up with the Scriptural spiritual equation concerning salvation. It is repentance + faith = regeneration.

II. From the House of Salvation to the House of Discipleship

The difference between the parable in Luke 14:16-24 and Jesus' teaching in 14:25-30 needs to be examined in light of discipleship.

Luke 14:16-24 = Speaks of Salvation (those who come to the supper)

“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

Luke 14:25-30 = Speaks of Discipleship (those who taste of His supper)

“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”

In Luke 14:16-24 and also Matthew 22:1-14 Jesus opens up the Gospel to the entire world (“and yet there is room,” “compel them to come in”). But in Luke 14:25-35 (also Matt. 10:37-39; Luke 9:23-26; John 12:24-26) Jesus deals with the matter of discipleship understanding that those who have come into the banquet room of His saving grace needed to be pressed about total abandonment to His will and their need to follow Him. The banquet room is free and opened to everybody! The banquet room is full. But the room marked discipleship, which involves surrender, sacrifice and suffering, is not nearly as full. All are welcome to the free feast of salvation but not every person is automatically invited into the room of discipleship. They must consider (“count”) the cost! The room of discipleship will yield both present satisfaction and

purpose in your life (“find your life”) as well as eternal dividends in view of the earthly messianic hope of eternal life in the coming kingdom reign (Matthew 16:27; 24:44-47; 25:14-23; 31-40; Luke 18:28-30; Matt. 5:10). The dividends will be determined by the wisdom of the investment.

Some Lordship writers have tried to mix discipleship with salvation in this passage of Scripture. It must be observed that in the matter of saving lost souls, Jesus wants His house to be filled in order to win as many as He can to salvation (see Luke 14:23). Everybody can come to supper! The previous parable was an invitation that invited the great masses of lost humanity to “come” and receive of the banquet of salvation (“compel them to come in”). People could come to Christ for salvation, without any strings attached to this free banquet offer, such as the requirement of discipleship. *There were no costs involved, requirements to meet or conditions to follow. All they had to do was come.*

In the course of the dispensational change, Christ was envisioning His turning to the masses of Gentile humanity in view of Israel’s rejection of Him as their Messiah and Savior. The Gentiles could simply come to Christ and accept His offer of salvation. However, when it comes to the matter of personal discipleship, He wants only those who are willing to pay the price (see Luke 14:27). **The house of discipleship will not be nearly as full as the banquet room!** For those who came into the banquet room, Christ is now asking them to follow Him. Believers who have tasted of His glorious salvation are now commissioned to follow Christ in view of His gracious feast, which He has provided for them. The cross of the Christian life speaks of sacrifice, surrender and suffering. Real committed disciples of Christ will have to bear a sacrificial cross for their Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. **Jesus is saying that coming to the banquet is free. However, those who come were not to rush into the matter of discipleship because it is costly.**

Immediately we can see the vast difference between coming to Christ for salvation and following Christ after salvation. Salvation is open to all who will come by faith, while discipleship is for believers willing to pay a price. **Salvation means coming to the cross and believing in Jesus Christ, while discipleship means carrying the cross and following Jesus Christ.** Saved people need to be dedicated. *Actual dedication or discipleship is a call to believers and not unbelievers.*

Dedication or discipleship (following Christ) is not a necessary part of saving faith or requirement for being saved. *Nether is a person’s willingness to become a disciple or follower of Christ an issue in salvation.* People may be willing to follow Christ and place their confidence in their desire to follow Christ to bring salvation into their lives. Likewise, we must ask the question once again, “What if the rich man whom we studied about actually did liquidate all of his riches and become part of the band of people who followed Christ?” Does this mean that he would have then been saved?

The answer is, “Absolutely not!” Following Christ does not guarantee salvation, as was the case in the life of Judas. As was demonstrated, following Christ in order to merit salvation is an impossibility because no person can follow Christ perfectly or flawlessly.

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” – Romans 3:28. Only faith in Christ will bring salvation into the life. Furthermore, a person can appear to be a follower of Christ and not be genuinely saved (John 6:66). We will deal with this in more detail in a moment. For now, let me say that the only issue which faces the poor lost sinner is that he must repent or change his heart and attitude about his sin and cling to the cross for salvation. If a person is thinking in the back of his mind that he does not want to give up his sin, it’s because he has not truly repented in his heart.

Unwillingness to change known sinful patterns in the life of people does actually keep people from genuine repentance and faith in Christ. However, we do not witness to people about their need to give up every sin in their lives and follow Christ. In doing this we will give them a wrong mindset about the way of salvation and the way to receive salvation, which is by faith, alone in Christ alone. Giving up your sins has nothing to do with salvation, but a genuine repentant heart will produce the attitude that one needs to give up certain known sins in his life. **A person does not have to give up sin to be saved; however, if a person does not have any desire to give up his known sin, it stands to reason that he has not repented in the true Biblical sense (“turned to God from idols”) and is not ready to come to Christ and be saved.**

When a person desires to hang onto sin with one hand and receive Christ with the other hand, he is not truly repentant of his sin and ready to receive Christ. The hearts of those who truly repent despise sin and do not love it. Their desire is to change their minds or attitudes about their sin and hate sin with a passion. Their desire is not to continue in their known sin. Nonetheless, they should never be presented with the teaching that they must give up all of their sins in order to be saved! **How sad it is when the poor lost sinner is handed the dictionary of sins and informed that he must forsake all of these sins listed in the dictionary and make a promise to live for Christ the rest of his life in order to be saved.** What a tremendous burden this must be for the sinner who has lived in utter defeat all of his life. There can be no hope for the lost sinner if he must view salvation as pertaining to the actual conquering of sin in his life. Repentance over sin is necessary; however, the forsaking of sin, or the fruit of repentance which we have already talked about, should not be construed as being part of conversion. **The change of heart toward sin will be evident in the life of a person who is ready for salvation. However, the actual change of living is not to be pressed upon the Gospel hearer.**

Another area we need to deal with concerning discipleship is the fact that there are various kinds of disciples or Christians. There are committed and uncommitted

disciples. There are vocal and silent Christians. *Disciples come in all sizes, shapes and even different spiritual conditions.* Scripture will bear this out. Those who teach Lordship Salvation always insist that discipleship is synonymous with salvation. They claim that being a disciple and being a Christian are the same thing. In other words, every Christian will be a disciple. This teaching may fit into a theological scheme, but Scripture cannot support it. To say that every Christian is a disciple clearly contradicts the teaching of the New Testament. In fact, Jesus clearly says that even unbelievers can be disciples! Such was the case with Judas (John 12:4). The term disciple cannot be equated with salvation in every case.

a. There are unsaved false disciples (John 2:23-25; 6:26, 64-66).

John 2:23-25 says:

“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”

This particular group of disciples of the Lord was following Him for the wrong reasons. Some wanted to see the miracles that He did and were only fascinated with the miraculous. There are many unsaved followers of Christ like this today. They seem to show interest in Christ so far as the miraculous is concerned. However, when it comes to holiness, sacrifice and true surrender, they fail miserably (see Matt. 13:21).

John 6:26 & 64-66 read:

“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”

Other disciples or followers of Christ wanted their belly full from the free handouts of food that Christ was giving. Wanting food was not wrong. However, to only want the physical benefits and not be willing to truly follow Christ in sacrifice and surrender was wrong. These unsaved disciples simply wanted to follow Christ for physical benefits and blessings like so many today in the modern Charismatic movement. For some, the only thing that captures their interest is the physical healing of the body and all the riches associated with the health and wealth gospel. They want the physical blessings but not the cross of suffering, sacrifice and shame. They do not want to take up their own cross (Luke 9:23) in order to truly follow Christ in the way that He has designed

genuine discipleship. Jesus talks about these types of disciples in a negative fashion. In other words, they are not a true picture of those who are practicing true discipleship.

b. There are saved secret disciples (John 19:38).

“And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.”

You will remember that our Lord expected discipleship to involve strict commitment (Luke 14: 25-33). However, it is apparent from various Scriptures that not every saved believer followed the Lord in this strict fashion. All true discipleship involved dedication and discipline upon the part of the believer. However, not every believer was dedicated or committed in the same degree. Not every follower would meet the required standards that Jesus established for true discipleship.

Joseph of Arimathea secretly followed the Lord without exposing himself. For some time he feared the response of the Jewish leaders if he were to step out and boldly proclaim to be a follower of Christ. Joseph of Arimathea was not willing to count the cost of discipleship (Luke 9:26-28) even though he was said to be a disciple. On the other hand, the Bible does say that Joseph was “a good man and a just (upright man)” (Luke 23:50). Nonetheless, he was not fully committed as a disciple was to be in that he did not fully count the cost of discipleship. Therefore, the Bible speaks of this kind of discipleship in a negative fashion. It is not the kind of discipleship that Jesus spoke about in the Gospel accounts.

John 12:42-43 says:

“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees **they did not confess *him***, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

Here is a similar instance where we see regenerate believers not taking a bold stand for Christ as they should and counting the cost of real discipleship. **Discipleship like this is seen in a negative manner.** Many Jewish individuals in high places did believe in Jesus, but for fear of being put out of the synagogue, they did not openly confess Him. They feared men’s opinions and loved men’s praise more than God’s praise. *They thought more of man’s approval than of God’s.* They were afraid of what their friends would say if they left Judaism. They were not willing to endure the reproach and suffering which would be heaped upon them if they boldly pronounced themselves to be followers of the Lord Jesus. There are Christians like this today. They go to work or school and try to fit in with the crowd. *They want to blend in with society instead of becoming a mark for God upon society.* Certain believers want to remain behind the scenes and not cause any waves for Christ. However, we must remember

that there is both reward and rulership privileges in the Millennial Kingdom based upon a person's level of commitment to discipleship.

Matthew 25:21

"His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Mark 10:29-31

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."

Revelation 2:26

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."

How sad that some believers fail to commit themselves to the kind of discipleship that will bring rich reward. Failure to confess Christ and stand up for Him (John 12:42-43; 2 Timothy 4:16) will result in little recognition and reward. *The kind of commitment that represents real discipleship is what Jesus is looking for in each one of our lives.* Christian commitment to Christ varies. However, this does not negate what Jesus requires for true and genuine discipleship, which is a life of total love, surrender and sacrifice for Christ (see Luke 14:25-27). When Jesus said in Luke 14:27 that you "**cannot be my disciple**" he was looking for a certain kind of believer who would wholeheartedly embrace Him. *Jesus is simply saying that unless you are ready to wholeheartedly dedicate yourself to Christ and follow His will, you cannot be the kind of disciple that He is looking for.* Only this type of person could be a real disciple or follower of Christ. Everyone else could not be qualified as a disciple who was not willing to place themselves under Christ's terms for discipleship. All others would fall short of what real discipleship is all about.

There may be various levels of commitment to Christ along the way among Christian lives, but real discipleship in the Christian life involves a total love, surrender and sacrifice for Christ. The kind of discipleship that Christ spoke about was not halfhearted obedience. It was an act of real surrender to the Lord that would lead to a life of total commitment and zeal for Christ in every area of living. This is what Jesus meant when He said you must "**hate**" everyone else and love Him most. In other words, Jesus was to be the top priority of love within your life. The "**cross**" speaks of surrender and sacrifice even as Jesus surrendered to the will of the Father and

sacrificed His own life in obedience to the Father's will. *Anything less than total love, surrender and sacrifice becomes only varying degrees of service and commitment to Christ.* **Discipleship is when believers finally decide to yield their entire lives to the Lord and place themselves under Christ's authority and rule.**

True surrender will never mean perfection, but real surrender will result in more victories and obedience to Christ than defeats or failures. Genuine disciples mean business with God. They do not keep one foot in the world and one foot in the church. They are ready to take the full package of what it means to follow Christ. *They are ready to follow Christ by loving Him supremely, surrendering to Him willingly and sacrificing to Him unceasingly in every area of their lives.* When we learn what Christ wants us to do, as He speaks to us through the Bible, it's then that we must yield to His Word. **If we stubbornly fail to do so, then we dismiss ourselves from the school of discipleship.**

We must also understand that certain believers are still in the training process of discipleship and are only beginning to discover what it means to follow Christ in important areas of their lives. As they are discipled along the way, they must learn to surrender to what God wants for their lives and not resist. I think that many believers simply need better training concerning certain areas of sanctification or holy living. They have the heart of a disciple and they are seeking to do what is right as Christ's disciple. I feel that many are still in the training process because they have not been told what God expects of them concerning holy living. How sad that they have not moved on in their learning concerning the Biblical tenants of separation and holiness.

Some disciples are simply learning more than others. *I say this to remind you that there are disciples with a real disciple's heart who are ignorant of certain truths about separation and what is right.* They have a heart to do what is right but have not been fully informed and tutored by other disciples concerning certain aspects of holy living. *They are a disciple of Christ, but still growing and uninformed.* This is why some disciples can be outwardly more committed than others and still be identified as a follower of Christ.

However, there is that class of Christians today who willfully want to deny separation and what Christ desires of their lives in the matter of holiness and separation. *They have heard and understood but refuse to change.* They willingly choose to not surrender certain areas of their lives to the Lord. **Jesus says that whenever we refuse to take up the cross and surrender our lives, then we cannot be His disciple.** It is very important to examine our own lives in light of what Jesus said about real discipleship. Here are some questions to ask ourselves:

- Am I surrendering my life to God?
- Have I been obedient to what I already know?

- Am I willing to learn all that God requires of me?
- How much do I really love Christ?
- How much do I sacrifice my life for the Lord?
- Am I a real disciple of the Lord?

Discipleship demands obedience to the known will of God. If the believer finds himself resisting truth and refusing to obey, then he disqualifies himself from the program of discipleship and from receiving a full reward (1 Cor. 9:27). Other believers have willingly dropped out of this program of discipleship altogether and have no real interest in discovering what God has for their lives. They do not want to go on or move forward in their love, surrender and sacrifice. They would rather remain stale and stagnant. Their ears become insensitive to the truth of the Word of God (Hebrews 5:11). These believers are not followers of Christ. They have demonstrated by their disobedience and stubbornness that they chose not to follow what Christ wants for their lives.

The difference between these two believers is that one believer may be a disciple who is still learning and growing. He may be in a process whereby he is learning what to root out of his life and how to fully express his love for Christ and fully surrender himself to the Lord. The other believer has willingly decided to defect from the life of discipleship. He has heard enough and still has not yielded. He is not interested in yielding at this particular time in his life. He has more interesting things on his agenda that keep him from doing what is right and following Christ wholeheartedly. Jesus said that this person with this attitude and rebellious heart **“cannot be my disciple.”** True discipleship means that you must love Christ most and surrender to what He wants you to do. When you defy His Word and teaching, then you are not His disciple.

It would then seem that people can be identified as followers of Christ within the training process of discipleship. It takes time to study the Word of God and discover what God expects of our lives. Those who are “disciples indeed” (John 8:31) are believers who continue to follow the teaching of God’s Word. This means that they continue to learn the truth, surrender their lives to truth and sacrifice their lives in order to practice the truth. They do what is right and are willing to count the cost of discipleship.

We can certainly look around at the local church today and understand that not every believer is living on the same level of commitment. To even think that they are is like trying to say that all believers in the church eat liver and onions every Sunday dinner. **The difference between the real disciple who is wholeheartedly committed to Christ and those believers who are only halfheartedly committed to Christ or rarely committed is their response to known truth.** If there is rejection to clearly known and understood truth, then you are not willing to love Jesus most and surrender to the truth or sacrifice your life for the truth. It’s then that Jesus says that you “cannot

be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). **The banquet room is full but the room of discipleship (surrender and sacrifice) is not as full!** Not every Christian is the kind of disciple that Jesus calls for in the gospel accounts. There are many believers who lack commitment and dedication to the cause of Christ. And because of their lack of commitment to Christ now they will lack reward by and by.

Where is your heart today? “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21). If you possess the heart of a real disciple you will be able to face truth and say:

“I am willing Lord, I am willing Lord,
To be just exactly what You want me to be”

9. There is the confusion about the term Lord.

This is a key area of confusion that is at the forefront of the issue of Lordship salvation. Lordship Salvation advocates teach that the term Lord suggests the idea of mastery over one’s life. Therefore, in order for a person to be saved, he must make Christ Lord or Master over every area of his life. This is why we have been referring to this view as the Lordship/mastery/discipleship teaching.

Arthur W. Pink was a largely self-taught classic Reformed theologian. He always understands the word “Lord” to mean surrender or mastery. He writes: “Saving faith consists of the complete surrender of my whole being and life to the claims of God upon me: “But first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:5). It is the unreserved acceptance of Christ as my absolute Lord, bowing to His will and receiving His yoke. Possibly someone may object, Then why are Christians exhorted as they are in Romans 12:1? We answer, All such exhortations are simply a calling on them to *continue as they began*: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6). Yes, mark it well that Christ is “received” as *Lord*. Oh, how far, far below the New Testament standard is this modern way of begging sinners to receive Christ as their own personal “Saviour.” If the reader will consult his concordance, he will find that in *every passage* where the two titles are found together it is *always* “Lord and Saviour, and never vice versa: see Luke 1:46, 47; 2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:18.”

The term “Lord” (kurios) is used 95 times in connection with the proper name of Jesus Christ. Jesus is called Lord no less than 747 times in the New Testament. The word itself denotes ownership, authority and control. In the Old Testament, this name Lord was frequently used as a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew word Adonai, which was used in the place of Jehovah or Yahweh. It was given instead of Jehovah as an act of reverence for this name. The New Testament word “Lord” was applied to Christ in order to express His deity. **Because of this, the term actually speaks of the divine being and character of God Himself. When it was applied to Jesus, it was conveying the truth that He was the divine God of the Old Testament revelation.**

There could be no mistake about Jesus Christ. He was Lord. In fact, He still is Lord! He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is “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). In fact, He is “LORD of LORDS” (Rev. 19:16 – same Greek word). Jesus is Lord of everything. He is Lord of salvation, Lord of history, Lord of the church, Lord of the disciples, Lord over the devil and Lord of the future. *This is based upon the irreversible truth that He is God and is in sovereign control over everything within the universe.*

The word “Lord” clearly reveals that Jesus Christ is the Almighty God who is the creator of all things and completely sovereign and in charge of everything. He stands above everybody and everything in the created universe and throughout the dateless past. He is the absolute superpower of the universe. ***Jesus is Lord simply because of who He is. He is God. Jesus will always be Lord whether or not people acknowledge Him as Lord.***

If He is already Lord of all, then how can a person make Him something that He already is? Because Jesus is God, all power is given to Him, and all of creation will be forced to bow before Him when He returns to earth to establish His kingdom. This will be a remarkable display of Christ’s absolute deity.

Philippians 2:9-11 says:

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“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 we pray using the name of Lord we are addressing Him as God and as the superior omnipotent God of the universe. We are addressing Him as the absolute controller of the ages of time. **“Jesus is Lord” (God) was an early church declaration of faith that linked the person of Christ with Jehovah or God, even as the Old Testament linked the term “Lord” with God (see 2 Samuel 7:28; 1 Kings 18:39; Psalm 30:2, 35:24, 86:15 with Acts 2:36; Hebrews 1:8-10; 1 Cor. 12:3).** These statements primarily identified Jesus Christ with deity or the Godhead. This name “Lord” signified the early church belief that Jesus was God.

Of course, we can also call Him Lord recognizing that He is the personal controller and master of our Christian lives. The concept of the term “Lord” can also be applied to the

Christian life and is used this way in certain Bible texts. Because Jesus was Lord or the Supreme Master of the universe (God), He was also expected to have absolute authority over the lives of His followers. *The term Lord denotes deity but can also imply the understandable surrender and dedication that believers were to have toward deity - God.* Later on in our study, we will note some instances where the term “Lord” also means surrender and submission to God. The important thing to remember is this. *The context of a passage will determine what shade of meaning the term is trying to convey.* **Many passages simply acknowledge His Lordship or sovereignty by identifying Him as the eternal God and ruler.**

For instance, the clear relationship between the prophecy of the coming Messiah in Isaiah 40:3 and its fulfillment in Matthew 3:3 clearly tells us that the coming Messiah was called “Lord,” which was another way of saying that the Messiah would be God incarnate. The term “Lord” is associated with the Almighty ruler God (Revelation 19:6; 18:8; 16:5,7; 15:3). This is why false teachers try to deny Jesus as the Lord (2 Peter 2:1; Jude 1:4). The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son who is called “God” in Hebrews 1:8 and “Lord” in Hebrews 1:10, comparing Jesus Christ (the Son) to God Himself.

Hebrews 1:10

“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.”

The term “Lord” is identifying Jesus as the eternal God of creation who laid the foundation of the world. Jesus always was Lord of everything because He was and always will be the eternal God of creation and time. To try and relegate the term “Lord” as only referring to the mastery over one’s life is simply not scripturally accurate. **Jesus is Lord because of who He is and not because of how He rules in people’s hearts and lives.**

Too little attention has been paid to the use of the title “Lord” in the context of apostolic preaching. Consequently the definition of the term has been assumed from general usage. The task is to examine the term “Lord,” (*kurios* – pronounced koo’-ree-os) in its salvation contexts in Acts during the days of the early church. When someone in the Book of Acts or in the early days of the church confessed Jesus as Lord, what was confessed about Him? As we will see, when the term “Lord” was related to faith, to conversion, or to the offer of the Gospel, the audience hearing the term would have understood this name as referring to absolute deity.

It is clear that when Peter spoke to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost that he was chiding them for crucifying the Messiah who was God incarnated in the flesh.

Acts 2:21

“And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

After saying that the people had crucified the Lord, Peter now tells them that they must believe on the Lord by calling out in faith and receiving His offer of grace and salvation. But what does it mean to call out in faith to the Lord? Peter answers this for us in the following verses by identifying Jesus with the Lord of glory or the eternal God of the Old Testament revelation. Thus, calling on the Lord means to call out in faith alone to God wanting Him to save your soul.

Acts 2:32-39

“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Reference to Psalm 110 shows that these events are part of the promise of the Old Testament. Jesus was the Lord in the sense that He was seen to be the Father’s exalted Son who was eternally one with Him in the Godhead. Thus the Lord Jesus confessed in Acts 2 is to confess Him as God Himself and the only one who can bestow the gift of salvation to the lost soul. Jesus is the Lord (God) on whom men must call to be saved. He is the Lord over salvation as He performs that intercessory duty at God’s right hand. Acts 4:12 puts it this way: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Acts 10:34-43

“Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, *I* say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets

witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

This passage presents Peter’s first message to Gentiles. Cornelius addressed God as Lord (see vs. 33, 22 with verses 2–4). Cornelius identified God with the term “Lord.” He understood that the term “Lord” was another word for God Himself. Peter declared that God shows no partiality, that He accepts all who fear Him (see 34–35). He then declared that peace comes through Jesus Christ, the One who is Lord of all (v. 36). In Peter’s mind, he regarded the term “Lord” with God Himself.

What is the nature of Jesus as Lord? Because Jesus is Lord (God), He had a ministry of power as He healed all who were oppressed by the devil (v. 38). As Lord, He was the object of a testimony that declared Him to be the Judge of the living and the dead (v. 42). He is the One of whom all the prophets testified that forgiveness of sins is found in His name (v. 43). By these statements, it would seem that Jesus as Lord describes the authority that Jesus has as God incarnate who had come in the flesh as the Bearer of salvation.

Acts 11:17 says:

“Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?”

Looking back over the Gentile conversion, Peter said that they called upon the Lord (God) even as the people did on the Day of Pentecost. We have seen that these people on the Day of Pentecost believed on the Lord Jesus as the Messiah or as God Himself. Jesus as “Lord” revealed that He was the God of Old Testament revelation.

In this verse (Acts 11:17) Peter compared the confession of the Gentiles in Acts 10 to the original confession of believers at Pentecost, a confession of the Lord Jesus Christ as the revealer of God. The expression “believing in the Lord” appears also in texts like Acts 5:14 and 9:42 which looks much like the summary of what Peter talked about in these two accounts. Thus, faith or confession in the “Lord” means to rely upon God Himself to save your life and grant you the eternal forgiveness of your sins. Furthermore, all men (Jew and Gentile) can express faith in God. The Lord (God) ignores racial distinctions in this dispensation and grants saving grace to all who call upon His name.

Acts 11:20-21

“And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned (conversion) unto the Lord.”

Acts 15:11

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

Acts 15:11 compares Gentile salvation to Jewish salvation as the two were debated at the Jerusalem Council. The two are treated as the same, with the point being made that through the grace of the Lord Jesus, salvation is offered to all men. The term “Lord” is the title of the person who dispenses grace and salvation to both Jew and Gentile. Here the picture of the “Lord” is like that in Acts 2. This agreement is not surprising, since Pentecost is the point of comparison. The Lord (God) is the Divine Dispenser of salvation.

Acts 16:26-31

“And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 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 caused this great earthquake to deliver Paul and Silas. The sheer demonstration of power on behalf of God's own people is what led the Philippian jailer to ask what he must do to be saved. The reply to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ would have meant to him that Jesus is the One with power to protect and save His own. To come to Jesus and believe on the “Lord” would then express faith in the true God of the universe. It meant to come in faith to the One with the power and authority to save. This is none other than God Himself. God can make the earth tremble and God can declare a person forgiven in His sight and only God can declare a person legally righteous in His presence.

Acts 18:8

“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”

Acts 20:21

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This passage is brief and clear and summarizes the presentation of the Gospel to the entire world through repentance and faith. Paul preached to the Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here repentance and faith

are placed side by side because both work together in the conversion of lost people. Furthermore, these twin truths were shared with both Jews (Acts 13:23, 38–39) and Gentiles (Acts 17:30). Paul presented Jesus Christ as Lord (God). Jesus was the Lord in the sense that He was God, the very One with the authority to grant salvation. The book of Acts is filled with this understanding concerning the term “Lord.”

Once again we must understand that this designation of Jesus Christ as “Lord” (God) was carried over into the New Testament which was written during the times of the Acts of the Apostles. The term “Lord” as referring to deity was also carried over into the later epistles and was known as a declaration of faith in the deity of Jesus (1 Cor. 12:3 – “Jesus is the Lord.” Many other verses verify that Jesus is Lord in the sense of deity or that He is one with the Father in His existence as the eternal God (see also 1 Timothy 1:1, 6:15; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 1:10; James 2:1; 1 Peter 1:3; Rev. 4:8, 17:14, 19:16).

1 Timothy 1:1

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is* our hope.”

1 Timothy 6:14-15

“That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

James 2:1

“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.”

1 Peter 1:3

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Revelation 4:8

“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

Jude 1:4 also makes this identification of Jesus Christ with “Lord” as Jude argues about those who would deny the deity of Christ: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying **the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

All of these verses tie in with the theme concerning the Lordship of Jesus Christ. **He is Lord because of who He is!** He is the eternal God, the supreme Master and Superpower of the universe, (kurios) who alone can bring salvation into your soul.

The questions that arise in the study of this word “Lord” focus on those verses that offer salvation to the lost sinner and those verses that deal with the Christian life of service. Does the term “Lord,” when coupled with belief, indicate that a lost soul must surrender to Christ and make Him the absolute authority over his life in order to be saved? Does it mean that an *unbeliever without regenerating life* must promise to give up all his known sins and reform his life in order to possess real faith and be saved? The answer to these questions is rather obvious. The believing sinner needs to accept Christ as “Lord” only in the sense that He is the absolute God of the universe. He must believe that Jesus is God in the true sense or understanding about God. He must believe in the deity of Christ.

The idea of ownership and the mastery of one’s life do not enter into the picture of saving faith in Christ. As we have seen, these are issues that deal with the Christian life. Therefore, the context that the term “Lord” appears must be taken into consideration in order to understand the intent of its meaning. **The term “Lord” means deity wherever it is used in connection with the offer of the Gospel.** As we’ve seen, this is the way it is used in the book of Acts and throughout Scripture. Therefore, we must ask these questions as we look at passages using the term “Lord.” Does the passage deal with the matter of salvation or Christian service? What is the primary focus of the passage? Does it center on saving faith or service in the Christian life?

Acts 16:31 once again reads:

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

As we have seen in the book of Acts, the matter of salvation is being dealt with in this passage. This verse indicates that salvation comes into the life of the sinner when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. The term “Lord” takes on the understandable meaning that a sinner must realize that Jesus is God in order to be saved. It is true that saved people need to be dedicated and come under the Lordship of Christ in their daily walk as a Christian. However, it is wrong to assert that the lost sinner must attempt to place himself under the Lordship of Christ in the area of surrender and obedience to Christ. **We must simply distinguish between Lordship as it relates to salvation and Lordship as it relates to the Christian life.** The believing sinner must accept Jesus as Lord or believe that he is God in order to be saved. The child of God must surrender to His Lordship in his everyday life. However, the title “Lord” in this salvation passage clearly reflects the deity of Christ. **A lost sinner must not surrender to Jesus as Lord, he must believe that Jesus is Lord!** When we confuse faith (belief) with works, we will also confuse those passages that deal with the term Lord in a

salvational sense or the sense of the Christian life. *The Lordship salvation view stresses the point that a believing sinner must not only believe that Jesus is Lord, but must also surrender to Him as Lord.* They do not view belief and surrender as two separate acts. Likewise, they do not view the term “Lord” as having different applications in certain contexts.

In order for a person to be genuinely saved, he must come to the place where he recognizes that Jesus is Lord. This means to recognize Jesus as the true sovereign God, who alone can save him. It means that he recognizes Christ’s absolute authority as God to save him and genuinely trusts in His person and work to save his soul. It means that he acknowledges Christ’s right and authority to be his Savior.

When a person receives Christ as Savior they also receive Him as Lord because that is exactly who He is!

Colossians 2:6 says:

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

We should never divorce the Lordship of Christ from His saviorhood! When a person receives Jesus as Lord they receive Him for all that He is – God of very God! To genuinely say that He is “Lord” means that you will possess saving faith in Him. This saving faith means that you enter into a relationship of dependence upon Christ, to be the only divine authority and true God to which you can turn for salvation (Acts 16:31). **To make the term “Lord” mean human surrender or obedience to Christ, shifts the salvation from the person of Christ to the person of man!**

J. Gresham Machen, 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...”

Hans Bietenhard, in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, writes: “In accordance with the usage of the Hellenistic synagogues God is frequently called *kyrios* (Greek “Lord”), especially in the numerous quotations from the Old Testament in which *kyrios* stands for *Yahweh*, corresponding to the custom of pronouncing the title *kyrios* instead of the tetragrammaton in public reading...*kyrios* frequently denotes God in Lucan birth narratives.”

B.B. Warfield also concurs that the term “Lord” was a reference to deity:

“The full height of this reverence may be suggested to us by certain passages in which the term ‘Lord’ occurs in citations from the Old Testament, where its reference is to *Jehovah*, though in the citations it seems to be applied to Jesus...It seems more

natural to understand the term Lord as referring to God Himself, and to conceive the speaker to be thinking of the coming of Jehovah to redemption in Jesus without necessary identification of the person of Jesus with Jehovah...We should never lose from sight the outstanding fact that to men familiar with the LXX and the usage of 'Lord' as the personal pronoun name of Deity there illustrated, the term 'Lord' was charged with associations of deity, so that a habit of speaking of Jesus as 'The Lord,' by way of eminence, such as is illustrated by Luke and certainly was current from the beginning of the Christian proclamation (Luke 19:31), was apt to carry with it implications of deity, which, if not rebuked or in some way guarded against, must be considered as receiving the sanction of Jesus Himself."

These conclusions by scholarly men down through the years give more weighty evidence that the term Lord simply indicates Christ's position as God and His ability to save us and grant eternal life. **Jesus as Lord means that He is the sovereign Master of the universe, the Controller and divine omnipotent God of the ages.**

John 20:28

"And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

Some Lordship writer's suggest that Thomas would not use the word "Lord" as meaning God in this verse and then go on to repeat that Christ is God. These Lordship writers conclude that if this were the case then Thomas would be saying, "My God and my God" and would make no sense. But Lordship writers who say this miss what Thomas is really saying. Here Thomas uses the word "Lord" and couples it with the belief that the term "Lord" means that Jesus is God. Thus, the word "Lord" in this context must out of necessity take on the meaning of deity. Thomas called Jesus Lord and then explained or conveyed what this term Lord really meant when he called him "my God." *Thomas was identifying Jesus with the Old Testament Jehovah when He called Him "Lord." The Old Testament Jehovah was called Lord and then was confirmed as being God in the same breath.*

2 Samuel 7:28

"And now, O Lord GOD, thou *art* that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant."

1 Kings 18:39

"And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God."

Psalm 30:2

"O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me."

Psalm 35:24 says:

“Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.”

Psalm 86:15

“But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”

Psalm 88:1

“O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day *and* night before thee.”

Jeremiah 38:17

“Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house.”

Hosea 2:23

“And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God.”

As you can clearly see, this Old Testament expression was known by the Jews and indicated that Jehovah was God. *Using the term Lord with God was a Jewish way of expressing personal faith in God Himself.* This is exactly what Thomas was doing in John 20:28. He was expressing true personal faith in God. But while saying this, He was looking at the resurrected Jesus. This meant that Thomas was identifying Jesus with the Jehovah of the Bible and eternity and claimed that Jesus was the divine God. **Thomas was simply reiterating this Old Testament expression of faith in Jehovah God. He was equating Jesus Christ with the Jehovah God of the Old Testament Scriptures.** *Jesus was that same Lord and God of the Old Testament revelation, which everybody spoke about and worshipped.* What a declaration of faith it was. John was reaffirming at the close of his book what was said about Jesus in the beginning of his book when he said that the “Word was God” (John 1:1). This saying of Thomas had nothing to do with Lordship in the Christian life but the Lordship of the person of Christ as the true Lord and God of the Old Testament revelation.

Here was a skeptical man, confronted by the evidence of Jesus' resurrection. He announced that Jesus, the Man of Galilee, is God manifest in the flesh. He confessed that He had personal faith in the Lord (“my Lord”) and then went on to explain what this faith in the Lord meant (“my God”). As the Old Testament expressions explain, it meant that his faith was in God. This is exactly the way the Jewish writers of the Old Testament expressed their belief in the Lord as the supreme Controller and God. John

Boys puts it nicely: “Thomas acknowledged the divinity he did not see by the wounds he did see.”

John 1:12 goes on to say:

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe on his name.*”

The pronoun “him” has reference to the person of Jesus Christ who is God. The entire context deals with belief in the person of Christ and not surrender to the mastery of Christ. In this context Jesus is presented as God and not the Master of our lives. He is called the Word (vs.1) and He is God (vs.1). He is also the Creator (vs.4). He has exegated God or made God known to a lost world (vs.18). This is the Jesus we are to receive. We are to receive Jesus Christ as the only true Messiah and God who can save our souls. Unfortunately, Israel rejected Christ as their Messiah (John 1:11). Therefore, in one sense Jesus becomes the Messiah of all the world of lost humanity if they will but receive Him as the true God.

Belief is a personal response to both the person and work of Christ (John 3:16). A lost sinner must believe in the uniqueness of God’s Son. He must believe that Jesus shared the same nature and existence of the Father as the one true God. The emphasis upon Christ, when it comes to salvation, centers upon His person and work. Jesus is God. God has come down to die in your place. Belief in His person and work is all that is needed to bring salvation into our lives (John 5:24; 6:40). The emphasis is on the person of Christ. He is the Son of man who has been sent by the Father in order to bring salvation to a lost human race. Therefore, we must believe in the unique person of the Son and realize that He Himself is the God of Heaven who has come down to rescue mankind. Only believe! Only believe! Believe what? Believe that He is God and that He can save you through His finished work upon the cross and in His triumphant resurrection.

Romans 10:9-10

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

This seems to be a main verse in the lordship controversy. Those who teach Lordship Salvation suggest by this verse that a person must openly confess that Jesus is Lord of their lives in order to be saved. They must openly acknowledge that they are willing to follow and obey Christ as their personal Lord in order to be saved. Let’s look at the verses before these verses and then seek to explain the meaning of Romans 10:9-10.

Romans 10:6-8 first declares:

“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the Word of faith, which we preach.”

Paul is saying that it is not necessary to bring Christ down from Heaven (incarnation) nor up from the regions of the dead (resurrection), since the incarnation and the resurrection are both established facts of Scripture. Therefore, we must have faith in the Word of God. We must believe what the Scriptures already say about these great events of history.

Romans 10:17 says:

“So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

The “word of faith” (Rom. 10::8) is talking about the need to express faith in the record of the Word of God concerning the death and resurrection of Christ. There is no need to see Christ performing these acts. Faith reaches out and grabs hold of these wonderful facts without having to see them literally. When a person believes in these facts of the Word of God, he is ready to exhibit faith in Christ for salvation. He is prepared to express faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The generation to which Moses was speaking had the message of the Lord. They could enter the land of Canaan by simply having faith in the Lord’s Word. The theme of Moses’ message was “the commandment” (Deut. 30:11), referring to the Word of God. Moses argued that the Jews had no reason to disobey the Word of God because it had been clearly explained to them, and it was not far from them. In fact, Moses urged them to receive the Word in their hearts (see Deut. 5:29; 6:5–12; 13:3; 30:6). The emphasis in Deuteronomy is on the heart - the inner spiritual condition. In a similar fashion, the generation that Paul was speaking to had the message of salvation revealed in the truth of Scripture (“it was nigh thee, even in your mouth and in thy heart”).

This means that they did not have to search for the message of salvation in some other place. They did not have to witness the actual incarnation and resurrection taking place. The truth of the Word of God was right in front of their noses in the record of Scripture that God had given to them. The truth of salvation is near to people if they will only look to the Word of God in faith! Paul’s generation could believe and confess the truth about Christ’s death and resurrection for the simple reason that the record of these events is recorded in God’s Word.

Now Romans 10:9:

“That if thou shalt confess (say the same thing about Christ that other Christians do) with thy mouth the **Lord** Jesus (Jesus as Lord – Jesus is God), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (a confirmation of one’s salvation as in Mark 16:16). For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness (how one is saved); and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (what happens after one is saved).”

In this verse Paul emphasizes once again the important of faith that results in confession. However, 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. **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). **When a person is confessing Christ as Lord (God) it’s because they have already confirmed in their own heart that He is risen from the dead.** The outward confession of Christ’s lordship (Jesus is God) demonstrates that a person’s faith already rests in the resurrected Christ. Romans 10:9 is then 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 one’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. When a person *confesses* that Christ is Lord they are purposely saying that He is the same God of Old Testament revelation (see Isaiah 43:11; 44:6, 8; 45:21-22 where Jehovah declares Himself to be the only God and the only Savior - there is none else!). When a person *believes* in his heart that Christ has risen from the dead he possesses a particular faith in Christ resurrection that confirms both His deity (Rom. 1:4) and payment for sin on the sinner’s behalf (Rom. 4:25). The outward confession results from the inward belief which has already occurred in the heart.

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. **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.** When Romans 10:9 says “thou shalt be saved” it is obviously speaking of the confirmation of a person’s salvation due to their outward confession of faith. **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! Here is the point. Every true believer without any hesitation should 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.

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 root; confession is the fruit.** The confession *validates* or *confirms* a person's salvation. **The real purpose of Romans 10:9-10 is not designed to teach the way to salvation but the proof 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. **Therefore, the confession is not a condition for one's salvation but the confirmation of one's 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 be saved; confession is something that a saved person does after they are saved** (Matthew 10:32; Rom.10:9). The word "confess" simply means that a person must give consent or agreement to what all Christians believe about Jesus Christ – that He is God. 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 believeth 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 or 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 - "with all your heart" and Romans 6:17 - "obeyed from the 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 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.

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 of all 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 evidences 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 *subjective* surrender to Christ’s lordship but with the *objective* belief in Christ’s deity and resurrection which is embraced in the heart and declared before others.

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 in error. 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 famous Christian declaration of faith (“Jesus as Lord” – Rom. 10:9 with 1 Cor. 12:3) is once again 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 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.

According to the Lordship Salvation or Reformed tradition, to confess the lordship of Jesus is not a mere confession of deity; rather it is a confession of total submission to the personal Lord, a commitment to obey in every area of life. In this view, to offer only

your faith in Jesus as Savior is “easy believism.” *If one does not choose to make Jesus Lord or Master by giving up all of his sins and forsaking every known sin then Jesus cannot be his Savior.* Their cry goes like this: “If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.” *In other words, you cannot be saved unless you give up all your sins and promise to serve God the rest of your days. Your faith must demonstrate immediate obedience.* To leave saving faith to anything less than a confession of Jesus as Lord (Master) of ones life ignores the discipleship teaching of the Scriptures and forgets that the basic definition of “Lord” is “master,” “ruler,” or “owner.” Thus, Lordship writers conclude that saving faith includes surrender and absolute obedience to the commands of Jesus and His Word. Of course, this view of confession (Jesus as Master) is nothing more than a cover-up system of legalism. As we will see in our exegesis of this passage, the confession being dealt with is actually the acknowledgment of the divinity or deity of Christ.

J. F. Rand said:

“There are many who have claimed to have taken Jesus as Lord who have not the slightest notion of what it means to be a child of God because they never have seen Him as the Savior. An undue emphasis on the Lordship of Jesus is the very thing which is wrong with much that goes under the name of evangelism today. Men can never yield themselves to Jesus as Lord until they have first come to Him as Savior. This is the proper order.”

Darrell Bock has correctly stated:

“The corrective to the Jesus-is-Lord view is to let the Lord Jesus protect the one who sincerely comes to Him in faith, rather than trying to “psychologize” faith so much that the focal point of the answer, the power and provision of the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes blurred. Such blurring occur’s when attention is drawn away from the Lord to an excessive concern with one’s personal state.”

He goes on to say:

“To add a confession of lordship (*surrender or mastery*) to the gospel is to run the risk of destroying the grace focus of the gospel, for how much lordship is enough to qualify as saving faith? According to this view the term “Lord” refers to Jesus’ divinity. This side can be called the Jesus-is-Savior view.”

As we know, the key point of contention in this debate is the term “Lord.” It is clear that the two views define this term differently as we have seen already. In this context we must ask the questions, “Does the confession refer to a confession of deity only (the Jesus-is-Savior view)? Or does it refer to a confession of submission of one’s life (the Jesus-is-Master view)?” We have already concluded that when the context is dealing with salvation, as this one is, then the term “Lord” points to the deity aspect of Jesus. Since the clarity of the Bible always speaks of faith alone (apart from works) as being the way to receive salvation, there is no room for argument on this point. Furthermore,

as we have seen in some length, the early church expressed faith in the deity of Christ when using the term “Lord” in connection with salvation. Therefore, out of necessity, the confession being spoken about in this verse is a confession that Jesus is God and has risen from the dead – a confession that authenticates one’s salvation as being genuine. **The text is talking about confessing something about Christ and not submitting to Christ.**

The expression “the Lord Jesus” (Romans 10:9) could more literally be rendered “**Jesus as Lord.**” This expression is clearly used in reference to the deity of Christ. The other Scriptures conclude that belief in the person and work of Christ is all that is needed to save a poor lost soul from eternal damnation. There is no hint of surrender being a necessary requirement for salvation to occur. The person and work of Christ is the only issue in salvation and not man’s surrender.

A.W. Tozer, who was a strong advocate of Lordship Salvation, said:
“We are not saved by believing in an office or a work.”

I cannot agree with Tozer and his conclusions concerning the way that a sinner is saved. Belief in the office (position and function) of Christ as God and the work of Christ is all that is needed to bring salvation into the life of a sinner. All a poor lost and helpless sinner must do in order to be saved is believe in the person and work of Christ on his behalf. Tozer, like other Lordship teachers, presses the issue that the term “Lord” must always deal with surrender. This simply is not true. Surrender is not implied in the salvational passages that use this word “Lord,” for all the other clear passages on salvation deal with only belief in Christ as the way of salvation. **Therefore, the lost sinner must believe that Jesus is Lord (God) in order to be saved. They do not have to surrender to Him as Lord (God) in order to be saved.**

In this setting, the term “Lord” has a clear reference to belief in the deity of Christ. Jesus is God and God has both died and risen from the grave. *Belief in the God who has died and risen from the dead results in God imputing righteousness to your life.* It’s understandable that if a person believes that God has risen from the grave that he will also believe that He has died on the cross as his sin-bearer. **Therefore, Jesus is Lord (God) in both His death and resurrection and the believing sinner must believe in his own heart that Jesus is the God who has died and risen for him.** Only then can righteousness be granted to his account.

In essence, the lost sinner who has the Word of God concerning the death and resurrection of Christ must believe two things. First, he must believe that Jesus is God. Second, he must believe that Jesus as God has both died **and risen** from the grave to provide salvation to his soul before the presence of a holy God. God is alive! God is not dead. You can’t forget the resurrection when it comes to saving faith, which brings God’s grace into your life. Without the resurrection of Christ there could be no salvation

before God. Christ's resurrection guarantees that God has accepted His blood sacrifice and that God has accepted us in His presence through the intercessory work of His risen Son (Hebrews 7:25).

There is also another debate in Romans 10:9-10 over the words "confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord." Many, over the years, have claimed that this particular section of Scripture advocates altar calls. In other words, the only people who can get saved are those who walk down an aisle and outwardly confess that Jesus is Lord of their lives. Public confession in a church is made a condition for salvation. There are those who teach that a person must outwardly, verbally and openly confess that Jesus is Lord or master of his own life in order to be saved. In other words, he must give an outward testimony to the fact that Jesus is the Lord of his life and tell a person that he is saved. Only then can he have the assurance that he is saved. Of course, the normal experience of the Christian life is confession and this comes after salvation. However, if outward verbal confession were necessary for salvation then what about those who can't speak and those who receive Christ on their deathbed? Can they be saved?

Let us remember Luke 6:45 which says:

"... for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

When presenting the Gospel to lost people we should include the message that Jesus is Lord. This means that we should emphasize who Jesus is – not what we must do. We should present to people that they must believe that Jesus is God Himself who has come down into the world to save them. We should not be negligent in using this term just because the Lordship teachers have misunderstood the meaning of the term in relationship to salvation and because of present day issues. We must present Jesus as Lord (God) to a lost race so that they will realize that God alone as the supreme Master and Ruler has the authority or right to dispense salvation to lost sinners. **We must preach Christ's Lordship by presenting Him as the only true and living God that can forgive sin and grant eternal life based upon His resurrection and promise of salvation.**

The passages in Acts argue that one need not fear presenting Jesus as Lord, provided one is clear about the definition of the term as the omnipotent sovereign God who alone has the authority and power to give salvation. **Jesus as the divine God and Dispenser of salvation is the point of biblical lordship in the matter of salvation.** Many who hold the Jesus-is-Savior view do present a high, authoritative view of Jesus in their gospel presentation, but they make it a part of their description of Jesus as only the Savior. We must remember that He is Lord! He is God incarnate and should be clearly presented this way to the lost. After all, only God can save the soul! Let us not be afraid to use the term "Lord" in our Gospel presentation. It is the term for deity. It is the name that gives everlasting hope to the hearer and believer. The lost person must realize that they can stake their eternal destiny on the Lord (God) and what He can do

for them and what He has promised in His Word. *The power and authority of the One to whom the sinner is to come by faith is an emphasis that evangelistic preaching can surely use.* When the greatness of the Deliverer and the deliverance He bestows is made clear, many will turn to this great Lord and Savior and His great salvation.

After emphasizing the term “Lord” (sovereign Master and Ruler) as a reference to deity, we must also conclude that in other cases the term “Lord” can connote personal rulership in the lives of people.

In Luke 6:46, Jesus spoke those soul wrenching words:

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

In these verses Jesus was addressing the type of lost people who frequently used the term “Lord” (God as the sovereign master or authority) but never lived like He was their master. This would indicate that the term “Lord” can within the appropriate context also indicate ownership and mastery. Here was a group of people who were calling Jesus their Lord or master and controller in life but were not living like it. They were not obeying what the Lord told them to do and practice. They merely used the cliché that Jesus was their Lord. However, it is not enough to call Jesus “Lord, Lord,” in a superficial way. Many people can claim that Christ is their leader and master within life but not know Christ as their Savior and obey Christ as their master. In a similar passage and context, Jesus records what this same type of unsaved people will say when Christ returns to the earth in the future. They will use the familiar “Lord, Lord” expression but will not possess genuine saving faith in Christ. In fact, Christ will say, “I never knew you” (Matt. 7:23). Here is how Jesus identifies this false profession of discipleship.

Matthew 7:21-23

“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. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

A great many people today have an external and superficial type of faith in God. They believe that God is their helper and guide in life. They call out to God for help everyday and address God as their master (“Lord, Lord”). They believe that their cries to God for help and assistance must prove that Jesus is their Lord or master of their life. In addition, many people also believe that Jesus assists them to do many wonderful things within their lives. This particular group of people will think that God is with them because of their miraculous powers (“and in thy name done many wonderful works”). They will really believe that God is with them and is their master in life because of the wonderful acts of mercy, which they have done in order to help other people. However,

the faith that many people possess in Christ is a faith that lacks real trust in Christ as Savior and Lord (the absolute authority) who can save their souls. Furthermore, the faith that many people possess never results in real genuine obedience to Christ. They do not practice the things that a saved person should do, such as bear fruit for Christ and live for Christ.

What they are doing is simply gratifying their own flesh by participating in the miraculous hype and supernatural things that they want to be involved with. And I should add that these people might very well want involvement with these miraculous happenings because this is where the money is at! However, this particular group of people do not allow Christ to be the true Lord of their lives even though they claim that He is master of their lives (“Lord, Lord” - “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say”)? These people may claim to do many other wonderful works, but they are not the things that pertain to the will of the Father, which is in Heaven (“the will of my Father which is in heaven” - Matt. 7:21). ***In other words, these people did their will but not the Father’s will.*** Therefore, all of their wonderful acts of humanity were not fruit generated by the Holy Spirit. It was man-made acts but not God’s moving or acts directed by His will. Therefore, God is not their “Lord” or master because these people actually refuse to follow the Father’s will and plan for their lives. They are only interested in their own gratifying experiences and goals in life. And in doing their own agenda in life, they bear no fruit for the Father. Their claim that Jesus is their master in life (“Lord, Lord”) is a false claim. *Jesus cannot be Lord of someone’s life when they are not directed by Him to do the Father’s will.*

So the other side of the term “Lord” can also denote sovereignty, master, and authority over a person’s life. *This meaning of sovereignty and mastery can be used to express deity, but it also can be used in connection with the Christian life to express genuine surrender and dedication to Christ.* When it is used in connection with Christian living or discipleship and not salvation, the meaning of the term can beautifully express the believer’s devotion and surrender to Christ. After Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus, he submitted to the Lordship of Christ.

Acts 22:10 reads this way:

“And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.”

Paul’s obedience to go into Damascus had nothing to do with his salvation. However, Paul was willingly obedient to Christ as his Lord since Christ became His Savior. He was ready to follow what the Lord as his Master wanted him to do. This serves as a beautiful illustration of what every believer’s heart and desire should be after they are saved. We should be willing and ready to follow Jesus as our Lord or as our personal Master and Leader of our lives. It is true that the saved or regenerate believer in Christ

should make Jesus Lord of his life. *He should come into this Master relationship with Christ and realize that Christ is to be the Master and Controller of his life.* There is to be real surrender and sacrifice to the Lord within the Christian life. It is proper to use the term “Lord” in connection with the Christian life.

This was the case in the life of Zacchaeus. He evidently believed on the Messiah while he was standing in the sycamore tree waiting to see the Messiah come. Before the Lord Jesus looked up and saw Zacchaeus, I think Zacchaeus looked down to the Lord in faith and was saved. The result was that Zacchaeus addressed Jesus as the “Lord” and then promised to change his life by restoring money to people that he had taken advantage of. What did Zacchaeus say?

Luke 19:8 says:

“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.”

Zacchaeus was a changed man as a result of looking to the Messiah in faith. And Jesus pronounced salvation on Zacchaeus (9-10) because the fruits in his life gave evidence of his faith in Christ. Giving up his riches did not save him but his faith in the Messiah did save him. Therefore, as a result, Zacchaeus addressed Jesus as “Lord” because he was now ready to place himself under His authority. Jesus was now recognized as his royal Master in life. This is a very beautiful picture of God’s transforming grace taking shape in his life.

After a person is saved he is called upon to submit to God (James 4:7), sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1-2) and present his body to God (Romans 6:3,13). *It is the saved people who need to be dedicated. Unsaved people do not have to be dedicated because they cannot be dedicated.* These verses which deal with dedication and surrender within the Christian life would be meaningless if those who have accepted Christ would have already surrendered to Christ’s Lordship. **Dedication is not a requirement for salvation. It is a call to the Christian.**

1 Peter 3:15

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”

This verse is reminding believers to set God apart as the Ruler of their hearts or the control center of their lives. We are to enthrone Him or enshrine Him in our lives. And within this context of the Christian life the term “Lord” is used in the sense of rulership and mastery. He is our Lord because we have set Him apart and given Him His rightful place in our hearts. Yes, Christians do need to surrender to His Lordship. We are to make Jesus Lord of our lives. This is to be our overriding ambition and goal in life.

The Bible does not teach Lordship Salvation. However, the Bible does teach surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ within the Christian life.

Let's state it in a clear fashion: *You must believe that Jesus is the Lord (God) in order to be saved but you are not required to follow Jesus as Lord in order to be saved.*

I cannot be saved if I fail to call upon Jesus as Lord (God). However, I can accept Jesus Christ as my Savior without getting rid of every sin in my life. I can trust in Christ as my Savior without surrendering every known sin to God and attempting to offer God my life of good works. However, we must remember that when a person comes to Christ through faith he is sending a message. He is acknowledging that he is entering into a new relationship of dependency upon Jesus. He is depending upon Jesus to save His soul but is also recognizing the fact that he needs Jesus in every area of his life as a sinner.

This is important to realize. The sinner broken over sin will be dependent upon Christ for eternal salvation and will automatically be recognizing his need for Christ in his life. This feeling of dependency up Jesus is intertwined with the repentance in a person's heart and life at the time of salvation. **Even though the thought of mastery is not included in the act of faith, the lost sinner will acknowledge that he is entering into a new relationship with Christ and that he needs Christ in every way – the saving way and the transformation way. This is part of the root system of repentance (a change of attitude about sin) that is expressed with saving faith, which ultimately results in the fruit of a changed life. The sinner's new awareness and attitude about his sin and desperate need for Christ (at the time of salvation) will also be accompanied by the new attitude to change his life. Ultimately, this new relationship of dependence upon Jesus Christ for salvation will spill over into their Christian life and lead to transformation and fruit.**

We must simply understand that the actual dedication and surrendering to Christ's Lordship comes after one is truly saved even though in the act of repentance there is a new heart attitude about sin and the need for change. The sinner will realize his need for Christ in salvation and in their daily living. I have personally witnessed this when leading people to Christ. People who repent have the desire to change their lives of sin. However, it is not until after salvation has occurred that the sinner can really begin to follow Christ and make life changes. It's then (after regeneration) that a person must approach Christ and ask that question as Paul did in Acts 9:6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Dedication is a call to believers. Jesus is asking *Christians* to place themselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. *To impose necessary requirements upon poor lost sinners to forsake every known sin and to get them to promise to serve God faithfully*

all the rest of their days on earth brings the excess baggage of works on their shoulders and in the Gospel presentation. Do not press the issues of the Christian life upon the unregenerate sinner. The repenting sinner will already have the attitude and desire of change in his heart as he repents. You do not have to set up a system of rules and requirements that the sinner must outwardly follow in order to get him to repent and change. Don't place something on the altar beside the free offer of the grace of God. Just let the sinner repent of his own sins on the inside of his heart! You don't have to set up a list of rules that bring him under bondage and forces him to change or else! Keep legalism out of the beautiful act of repentance. Legalism can actually keep a man from repenting because he will know that he cannot follow the rigors that are placed upon him. It places the repenting sinner in a dilemma that he was never intended to be in when the Gospel is presented.

Repentance is part of the act of conversion when the lost sinner inwardly turns to God away from the sins of his life (“turned to God from idols” – 1 Thess. 1:9). This means that in the act of repentance there is this acknowledgment of a need for change when the sinner turns from his sins. This understandably points to a different attitude about sin and a desire for change. **A person will not inwardly turn to God from sin without wanting to change his life! Therefore, when presenting the Gospel you must let the sinner repent on his own. His repentance over his own sin will include the inward turning away from sin in his heart.** This will include the desire for change and a new willingness to transform his life in this new relationship with Jesus Christ. But there is a vast difference between the inward surrender connected with repentance that leads to conversion and the false plea for outward change and conformity in order to be converted or saved.

The distinction must be maintained between turning from sin on the inside of the heart through the Spirit's inner conviction and demanding that a person turn from sin on the outside in their manner of conduct in order to be saved. God looks at the turning of the heart when it comes to salvation (Romans 10:10); He does not look at the turning of the person in reformation.

The wrong way to present the Gospel:

“Jesus Christ died for you upon a cross bearing your sins and judgment. He was then buried. But He rose again to give you eternal life and salvation from hell. Have faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work to save your soul. But sinner, you must surrender your whole being and life to God. You must change your life. You must give up all of your sins. Stop your drinking and stop your smoking and stop your swearing. Become a disciple of the Lord. Make Him your Lord or Master. Turn your entire life around and become a disciple or follower of Jesus. Promise to follow Him the rest of your days. When you make this commitment only then can your faith in Christ be real and genuine. You see, you must repent or change your way of living so that you can be saved.”

Please note that in this offer of the Gospel repentance is seen as reformation and is tacked on to the end of the Gospel presentation in the form of Lordship Salvation legalism. In the true offer of the Gospel repentance comes first and prepares the way for faith in Christ. Please note the next presentation of the Gospel.

The correct way to share the Gospel:

“Dear friend, you must understand that you are a sinner. And you must come to the place where you will repent of your sins. This means to change your mind and attitude about your sinful life and condition before the true and holy God and no longer look to yourself to merit salvation. Jesus Christ died for you upon a cross bearing your sins and judgment. He was then buried and rose again to give you eternal life and salvation from hell. Place your faith alone in Jesus Christ and His finished work to save your soul from hell. He will save you just as you are! His grace and offer of salvation is free (Romans 6:23). Salvation is a gift to receive (John 1:12).

The sharer of the Gospel does not have to press the issue of Lordship Salvation by weighing down the sinner with the rigorous demands of discipleship and his need to forsake every known sin in his life and give up all of his sins so that he can have real faith and be saved. **Surrender and desire for change is part of genuine repentance. It is at the very core or root of repentance, which involves a change of attitude about sin.** A new attitude about sin will naturally lead to a change in lifestyle. Therefore, you don't have to insist that the lost sinner line up with some legalistic system in order to be saved. Do not stress the issue of discipleship to the lost sinner where they feel pressed to follow Christ or else they will be doomed for eternity because their faith was not real. **In repentance (a new attitude about sin) the sinner's heart is already surrendering and desiring change so that when he repents and places faith in Christ for salvation there will be a definite change that takes place in his outward living. I say again, just get out of the way of repentance and let the sinner do the repenting!**

To incorporate a list of requirements for the sinner to do in order to be saved is the error of Lordship Salvation. To demand that a poor lost sinner must outwardly surrender every sin in his life and give up his sins so that he can have genuine faith and salvation is nothing more than an incredible hoax on the Gospel message!

Sinners need to inwardly repent and turn from their sins but not be forced with the legalism of outwardly forsaking their sins in order to have real faith and ultimately be saved. Keep repentance repentance and keep faith faith and keep grace grace and the Gospel the Gospel. Let each have their perfect work and way in the glorious plan of salvation! Get out of the way of salvation and the sinner turning to Christ!

The sinner who is truly repentant will recognize that he is about to enter into a new relationship with Christ and that he will need to depend upon Christ in this new relationship. This will lead to change in his life after he is born again. Remember that it takes the new life of Christ to assist a person to change. If there is no new life there can be no new way of living. **To talk about the actual need for the lost sinner to change is to ask him to do something that he cannot do.** So keep the Gospel clear. Let the person repent and have faith in Jesus Christ alone. After they are saved, teach them about the outward discipline and surrender of the Christian life and their need to become a follower (disciple) of Christ. Be careful. Don't put the cart before the horse! The actual surrender and change of living is expected from people who are already Christians. Only those who are saved are expected to outwardly surrender their lives and change their lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This is again pointed out in several Scriptures.

Jesus spoke about servants serving their lord or master in the parable of Matthew 24:42-47: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods."

The point is this. Believers were to serve the Lord in view of His coming to earth. They were to be faithful to Him in light of His kingdom return. Lordship was connected to daily living and surrender. The same truth is brought out in Matthew chapter twenty-five.

Matthew 25:19-21 says:

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

When Jesus returns to earth He will inspect the lives of his servants and see how they have served Him as their Master or Lord. In this parable we see how the idea of Lord indicates mastery and ownership over the personal lives of people. The Lord is portrayed as "the lord of those servants" in the parable to indicate that the Lord is to control their lives and they must surrender to Him and do His bidding in light of His return.

We must remember that yielding to the lordship of Christ within the Christian life is a lifelong commitment. It is not a decision that a person makes at the time of his salvation and then lives as he promised to live the rest of his life. ***Practicing lordship is a daily matter dealing with the Christian life and not a decisional matter for salvation.*** Jesus said that we must “daily” take up our cross of surrender and sacrifice and follow His will and way for our lives (see Luke 9:23). This is certainly a spiritual challenge that only believers can face as they yield to God and the new life residing within them.

Many of us will remember that old saying: “If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.” This is not an accurate saying. The fact is this. *Jesus can be Lord of certain areas of my life and not Lord of other areas.* Only as we learn the Word of God and willingly submit to His mastery or control over our lives, can we become the kind of follower or disciple that Jesus wants us to be (Luke 14:33). Jesus can certainly be Lord of particular areas of the believer’s life without being Lord of every area of his life. Nonetheless, if we want to be the kind of disciple that Jesus wants us to be, we will learn to surrender and sacrifice our lives on a daily basis. We will grow in grace and learn to forsake our way of living for His way of living. Of course, Jesus can be considered to be Lord of a person’s life without that person reaching perfection. The individual who submits to Christ’s lordship or mastery over his life will seek to live in surrender and yield to God’s way and authority. If this attempt is lacking, then Jesus certainly cannot be the true Lord or Master of his life. Jesus said that a person cannot serve God and his own desires or agenda in life.

Matthew 6:24 records the words of Jesus:

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Although Jesus can be Lord of certain areas of the Christian life and not Lord over other areas, it’s important to understand that Jesus cannot truly be Lord (Master) of our lives when we are persistently resisting His will and plan for our lives. *Those who are openly serving their own agenda in life and resisting the will of the Lord for their lives cannot possibly have Christ as Lord or Master of their lives.* The lordship of Christ involves real surrender to God’s will for our lives. It involves consistent sacrifice and surrender to God’s way and will for our lives. *When we become caught up in our agenda of life and ignore the Lord’s program and will for our lives, then Christ cannot be our Master.* We must be careful in our day to day living. There are many things that can master our lives and steal our dedication from Jesus Christ and what He wants us to do. Sports, hobbies, work and money are just some things that can steal our hearts away from the Lord’s plan and purpose for our lives. Only the believer who is daily yielding to Christ’s lordship can really be considered the kind of disciple with whom

Jesus is pleased. Disciples are those who are willing to give up their own plans, goals, wishes and desires for Christ.

Isaac Watts wrote:

“When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Jesus said in Luke 14:33:

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

The Master has called you! Jesus has called each one of us to the place of surrender and sacrifice. And we must remember that there is great contentment and joy within our lives when we submit to His lordship. When we are knowingly submitting to God’s will for our lives and practicing what the Word of God is revealing to us, then our lives can be rich and balanced. We should be ready to respond to the lordship of Christ over our lives as Christians.

James 4:10 says:

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

The believer must learn to humble his life before the presence of the Lord. When he casts himself before the Master, only then can his life be lifted up out of defeat and despair and into the place of victory, blessing and satisfaction. Furthermore, only as we submit to Christ’s lordship or mastery in this present life can we expect to receive honor and recognition in the next life. *The way up is down!* We must learn to humbly surrender our lives to the wishes of the Master!

Charles Thomas Studd said:

“If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.”

10. There is the confusion about the ease of becoming a Christian.

Lordship teachers stress that if all people must do is to believe on Christ for salvation without promising to surrender their entire lives to Him and make themselves disciples of Christ, then they will not possess true saving faith. All they will do is believe on Christ, and that is too easy and not sufficient to bring salvation into your heart and life. The term “**easy believism**” is a misnomer. It’s not easy to believe on Christ as your Savior. Salvation is free to receive and available to all repentant sinners who ask for it. However, it is not easy to make the decision to place saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:6-10

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

It is not easy to believe in someone who offers pure grace. We must remember that we grow up in a merit system that promises to reward us according to our efforts and hard work. We live in society that grants acceptance on the basis of our performance. There is kind of a merit system that permeates all of our society and the religious systems of the world. ***It’s not easy to believe that someone will do something good for us even when we do not deserve it!*** So it is with Christ. He promises to save us without any merit system or promises. He reaches out to a lost human race that is incapable of saving themselves (“without strength”). Christ reaches out to a race of rebel people, who are His enemies. This is hard to believe! He reaches out to lost mankind and simply promises to save them by His free grace (Eph. 2:8-9). This is very hard to believe and grasp because of the merit system in which we have been schooled.

Likewise, a person can be told about the historical death of Christ, which took place some 2,000 years ago. He can then be asked to personally believe that Jesus died upon a cross bearing all of his sins and all of his judgment. Certainly this is not a message that is easy to believe. A person is told that Jesus arose from the grave 2,000 years ago and is alive today. He is told that Jesus is waiting for him to personally respond to Him for salvation so that he can be saved from hell. Certainly this is not the easiest message in all the world to believe. *When we ask someone to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are asking him to actually do something, which is difficult.* We are asking a person to believe in someone who they have never seen. We are asking people to believe in someone whom lived in the distant past. We are asking people to believe in someone who has no eyewitnesses living in the present time to verify His claims.

Furthermore, when we ask people to believe that a person can forgive sins, we are asking them to believe in an almost unbelievable concept. We are asking people to believe in someone who has lived long ago and died upon a cross to forgive them of all their sins and grant eternal life to them. We are asking people to stake their eternal destiny upon Jesus Christ. Is this easy? I think not! It's not "easy believism" or easy to believe on Jesus Christ as the lordship writers have claimed. Salvation is free and all that God requires is belief or faith in the person and work of His Son. However, to get to the place of belief is not easy. It takes deep consideration and the generation of faith in the person and work of Christ, which was accomplished literally thousands of years ago. **It's not easy to believe.**

I remember talking to a man in a hospital room. He was dying. I had visited him several times. In despair he finally blurted out to me, "How could someone's death, which happened so long ago, have any possible relevancy for my life today?" This man was having a hard time believing. It was not easy for him to believe as so many are saying in the Lordship Salvation camp. People must allow the Holy Spirit to move in their hearts and then they must decide to accept the historical significance of these Spirit taught claims as having practical value for their own lives in the present. There is a time of searching and a time of decision.

There is a time of deep soul searching regarding their sinful life and the only remedy that can take care of their sin. As the scales of disbelief and depravity are removed each person must make a conscious decision to accept what the Spirit is teaching them and come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is the answer and the Balm of Gilead who can heal their sin-sick soul. Alas, not every person wants to cooperate with the Spirit's wooing and call. They choose to remain in their blindness and intellectual unbelief. It is said that they become "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). It is not easy to believe. Satan is fighting to blind the mind (2 Cor. 4:3-4) while the Spirit is seeking to open the mind (1 John 16:8-11). Years of secular teachings and humanistic heresies must be abandoned for the light of the truth.

I recall witnessing to a young couple in my study. The man was already saved but his fiancée was not. As I shared the Gospel with her I could almost see the wheels turning in her mind as the Gospel went against the humanism of her college classes which taught rational claims as being the only acceptable course of belief. No, it is not easy to believe. That is why the Scriptures say that the preaching of the Gospel is foolishness to the secular philosophies of our day and time.

1 Corinthians 1:20-21 says:

"Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the

world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

1 Corinthians 1:23 says:

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

The Gospel is not something that is easy to believe. It goes against satanically inspired systems that have been entrenched in the minds of people. It goes against secular wisdom in our society that places man on a level of goodness and elevates him to a status of acceptability before God. It goes against the promotion of pagan philosophies and mystical religions that are being promoted in our day. It goes against works, against humanism, against evolution, against intellectualism, against mysticism, against reincarnationism, against liberalism, against communism and is against every rebel order that you could think of today. And Lordship Salvation teachers will tell you that it is easy to believe! I think not. It is not easy to believe. It takes the Spirit's moving and the individual acceptance of the Gospel as it seeks to tear down all these walls of unbelief and blindness.

Jesus asked in Matt. 22:42, “What think ye of Christ?” Dear friend, your eternal destiny hangs on this question! How would you answer it? Do you believe that Christ is the Son of God, the Lord God of eternity, who has died in your place and risen from the dead in order to grant salvation to you? Have you personally responded in belief to the fact that Christ is God's Son, who alone can save your soul from hell and damnation? What do you think about Christ?

In finishing this study, allow me to once again quote what Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to say about faith and salvation to his students. He said in unmistakable terms:

“I will go throughout eternity saying, I only trusted Christ.”

That is why we will go throughout eternity singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!” It's because we have trusted in the provision of the Lamb of God, which can save us.

Revelation 5:9 records the heavenly scene:

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

Allow me to close by giving my testimony. I am so glad that Jesus loved me in spite of my sin. I am so thankful that He welcomed me with open arms into the fold as a condemned and unworthy sinner. One particular evening an old-time evangelist was speaking about hell and how I would be judged for my own sin. The weight of my sin was upon my heart that night. I knew I was lost. There I stood as a hopeless and

helpless sinner incapable of carrying out any promises to God. The hymn was playing, "Just as I am without one plea..." I knew I could not surrender and be committed to God. I had no spiritual life and no spiritual help to accomplish such a lifelong task. I only knew one thing. I was lost and needed Christ. I knew that Christ would take me just the way that I was. I knew He would pardon me by His free grace. When I walked down the aisle of the church, I was ready to repent of my sins and place faith in Christ alone to be my personal Savior. And this is what I did that wonderful evening back in 1973. Walking down the aisle did not save me. God's grace saved me as I placed my faith alone in Christ to deliver me from judgment.

I am so glad that God placed no preconditions upon my life that night concerning submission and my need to give up all my sins. I am so glad that He did not ask me to do something that I could not do. I am grateful that God offered His grace to me freely that night. I made no promises to Him about what I would do for Him in the future. I did not even know what I had to do for Him. I did not offer my life of commitment to Him that evening because Jesus was offering His own saving life to me instead. Jesus did not whisper in my ear that I must follow Him or else! This would have placed a heavy burden upon my heart knowing my inability to accomplish what He required of me.

All God asked me to do that evening was to repent or change my mind about my sinful condition before God and His plan of salvation. He wanted me to accept the offer of salvation as seen in the plan of salvation. The call was very plain and clear to me that night. The call was convicting and compelling. I am so thankful that God accepts repentant sinners like myself without price. For on that night long ago, He accepted me just the way that I was, and I was saved freely by His matchless grace.

Romans 3:24 once again says:

"Being justified **freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

All that Jesus asked me to do that evening was what He asked the woman at the well to do. Jesus asked her to simply believe who He was and then she could ask for the gift of eternal life.

John 4:10 once again reads:

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God (eternal life), and who it is that saith to thee (God the Savior), Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have **given thee** living water."

I sensed that this is what Jesus was asking me to do on that night long ago. I stood by the well of my own conviction. There I was standing in my shoes as a lost sinner. I had absolutely nothing to offer Him. I was a hopeless sinner condemned to die the sinner's death. As the inner convicting voice of God's spirit revealed my lost estate before my eyes, I realized that I stood spiritually naked before God. There was nothing left that I

could ever do to gain God's favor. All my promises to try and live for God were in vain. The call of God was very clear. It was a call that directed me to personally walk down the isle. It was the call that silenced my fears and said, "Just believe who I am and walk down the isle and take eternal life. It's yours for the asking. It's absolutely free."

Revelation 22:17 is the call that I received on that life-changing evening. It was the same call that every burdened and hopeless sinner receives when he comes to Christ for salvation.

"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**."

On that night long ago I asked the Lord (God) to save me, and He did for me what He promised to do for the woman in Luke 7:42. He **frankly forgave me** and then **gave** me eternal life, which would last for time and eternity. He just reached out and **gave** me eternal life at my asking. What grace and mercy!

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?"

William R. Newell has written the beloved words that have charmed the hearts of many over the years. They have been the words, which have given hope and confidence to multitudes of believers through the years. They are the words to the beloved hymn "At Calvary." They give an accurate summary of the person's gratitude to Christ for the free offer of salvation. The subsequent life of surrender to the lordship of Christ as Master or King which follows this free offer of salvation is also beautifully expressed in this hymn. Listen to these words as you read them in this closing page and rest in what God has done for you by His matchless grace. His grace can only be one thing. It's grace that is free and without charge! Now you can sing these wonderful words that are recorded on the final page of this study. Every poor lost sinner who has been saved by the free offer of God's grace will want to sing these words with gratitude and endless wonder.

Years I spent in vanity and pride,
Caring not my Lord was crucified,
Knowing not it was for me He died On Calvary.
Mercy there was great and grace **was free**,
Pardon there was multiplied to me,
There my burdened soul found liberty –
At Calvary.

By God's Word at last my sin I learned;
Then I trembled at the law I'd spurned,
Til my guilty soul imploring turned To Calvary.
Mercy there was great and grace **was free**,
Pardon there was multiplied to me,
There my burdened soul found liberty –
At Calvary.

Now I've given to Jesus everything;
Now I gladly own Him as my King;
Now my raptured soul can only sing of Calvary.
Mercy there was great and grace **was free**,
Pardon there was multiplied to me,
There my burdened soul found liberty –
At Calvary.

Oh the love that drew salvation's plan!
Oh the grace that bro't it down to man!
O the mighty gulf that God did span At Calvary.
Mercy there was great and grace **was free**,
Pardon there was multiplied to me,
There my burdened soul found liberty –
At Calvary.

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