

## Lordship Salvation

### WHAT IS MEANT BY 'LORDSHIP'?

The term 'Lordship' is defined by various religious groups as follows:

- "...willing[ness] to turn away from every known sin, God being your helper...let[ting] Jesus sit on the throne of your life..."

—The Bottom Line, West Columbia, SC

- "...Surrender [your] will for the will of Christ...to take His rightful place on the throne...You must step down and relinquish the authority of your life to Him...surrender your will completely to Him ...your Lord and Master...[Your] interests [are] under [the] control of [an] infinite God, resulting in harmony and purpose"

Bill Bright, President, Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc.

- "...Take control of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be."

—Four Spiritual Laws, Bill Bright

- "...follow Jesus as my Lord and obey Him in all that I do."

—Decision Magazine (Billy Graham)

- "...Inviting Jesus to...control your life."

—Steps to Peace With God, The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

- "...Jesus as your ruler...control[ler of one's] life."

—Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

- "...[For Christ] to help us become what we ought to be...[God's] love to dominate [one's] life and to be expressed in all actions."

—Four Great Emphasises of United Methodism, Board of Evangelism of the Mississippi Conference.

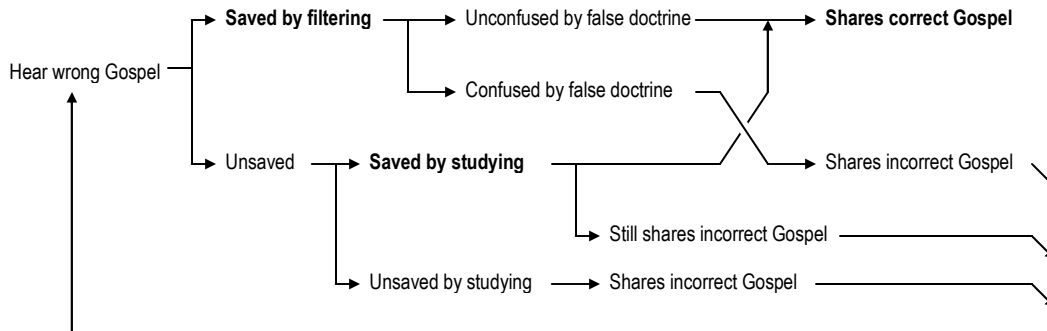
- "...[Y]ou surrender your will and mind to [the Holy Spirit's] influence...by thinking about Him; by taking Him into your mind; by making Him your fixed thought; by studying about Him; by living with Him; by making Him the central fact of your life...The answer, then, is complete spiritual surrender and commitment...Get your thoughts under control."

—Foundation for Christian Living, Norman Vincent Peale

These are all good descriptions of 'Lordship' and mirror the message of scripture [Eph.5:1-6:20]. It must be recognized that to accomplish a life like the one described in the above quotes is *very* difficult. It may take years, guided by the indwelling and outworking Holy Spirit, to mature to a lifestyle that emulates Christ and yet never quite succeed [1Jn.1:8,9]. It is the Holy Spirit working through the believer that produces that kind of lifestyle and not the human effort of the believer' [1Cor.15:10; 2Cor.2:14;3:6; Eph.3:7]. The believer's only responsibility is to stay in fellowship with God through confession of sin [1Jn.1:8,9] and once in fellowship to remain responsive to the Spirit's guidance. God will handle everything after that. Even so, submitting to God's guidance remains a battle between our new nature and our old sin nature.

Herein lies the problem. Each of the above quotes describing 'Lordship' was lifted from literature describing how to become 'saved' or 'born again'. Each organization used these quotes as part of the plan of salvation and *not* as part of a plan of discipleship *after* salvation. Since the indwelling of the Holy Spirit takes place at the point of salvation and not before, then to include in one's Gospel presentation the need to change behavior as a *prerequisite* to salvation is to ask the impossible. Without an indwelling Holy Spirit the person's attempt at self-reformation is doomed to failure. They may look whitewashed on the outside, but their heart will not have changed (Matt.23:27). Since self-reformation is a 'work'—a very difficult work—then it cannot be included in the plan of salvation. After all, 'reformation' (even the desire to reform) does *not* pay for one's sin debt.

You may ask why, then, do these otherwise fine organizations promote a false Gospel? They do it because it seems to work. God doesn't require you to be an expert at the Gospel message to lead a person to Christ. Each of these organizations presents a Gospel that includes all of the essential elements (even if they then add a little of their own). The Holy Spirit that is working in the person's life to bring them to grips with the Gospel *is* then capable of filtering out the added error we, as imperfect creatures, may add. Even so, that is a poor justification for tempting God.



It is the well-defined infrastructure that many of these organizations share in common that allow them to enjoy such great success. Whether the person believes the real Gospel and filters out the Lordship error, or, believes the error too, they are quickly introduced to a discipleship program to acquaint them with God's Word. Those that were truly saved begin to grow immediately and simply fail to recognize the subtle distinction between salvation and discipleship. They share the Gospel as they heard it and sometimes see the same results. For those that also believed the error the introduction to discipleship is the same. These people are sometimes (but not always) saved through the study of scriptures about salvation during discipleship training. Rather than fault the message, they humbly fault their earlier understanding and continue to share the same errors that indirectly lead to their own salvation.

For both types of people the error becomes self-perpetuating and is fed by massive amounts of literature generally available through these same organizations. The error takes on the trappings of doctrinal truth simply because it has become so familiar and not because it can withstand any critical examination of its content. After all, it is much easier to believe a lie that you have heard a thousand times than to believe the truth you have heard only once.

Concerning the verses routinely used to support Lordship salvation I will refer to one of the most outspoken proponents of this position —The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Their tract entitled *Make Jesus Lord* is a clear summary of the various pro-Lordship interpretations of scripture. We shall examine each scripture reference made in this tract.

[Acts 2:36] – Notice the distinction between His roles. He is both Lord (master) and He is Christ (the 'anointed' savior). The scripture is very clear that Christ is to be our Lord, but it does not mix the roles.

[Phil.2:9-11] – Paul is speaking to those who are already saved. This is clear from vs.13 since God does not work from *within* the unsaved, but from without. They are also spoken of as 'sons of God'—a reference to mature Christians. Whether the referenced verses refer to future judgments or current lifestyle (or both) is immaterial since all believers are called to become mature disciples. The point is that it is *not* a reference to the expected behavior of unbelievers.

[Lu.2:11] – The fact that Christ *is* Lord is not to be confused with *making* Christ your Lord. Christ has been Lord for all eternity. It is His role as Lord which Gives Him the authority to die for our sins. Our role is to recognize His authority to die for our sins through the Gospel message, but it is not our role to submit our old nature to His leadership as a prerequisite to salvation (upon reflection, it will become obvious that this is an impossible task [Rom.3:10-12]).

[Rev.22:20] – John was already saved and actively pursued discipleship. This reflects the attitude of a mature Christian, but not of the unsaved.

[Acts 16:31] – This isn't a command to submit to the Lordship of Christ to become saved. Rather, it reflects the role of Christ to Paul and Silas (both of whom were saved and active disciples). It would be similar to my introduction of you to my father, "Friend, meet a trusted advisor and father." He may be a trusted advisor to others beside myself - including you, but he is my father and not yours. If you become an adopted child of the father, then he will also be your father, but until then he can only be a trusted advisor.

[Acts 9:6] - Paul refers to Jesus as Lord, but at this point he has not trusted Christ as His savior. That doesn't occur until after Paul meets Ananias [Acts 22:16]. At this point Paul is simply reflecting his awe of the apparition. There is no indication that Paul's obedience was due to a new found attitude of Lordship, but appears to be more due to fear, wonder and the desire to cure his blindness.

[Rom.10:13] - He is Lord to the person doing the witnessing, not to the person being witnessed to. Also it is clear that the issue is not the Lordship of Christ, but His role as savior (Jesus Christ = Jehoshua Christos = 'the anointed savior among us'). To "call upon" His name literally means to 'invoke' His name (by believing the Gospel of Grace).

For additional study on the various types of works currently being promoted as part of the Gospel refer to the study titled GALATION ERROR (The Neo-Evangelical Movement).

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