

Views on Lordship Salvation

Must Christ be Lord to be Savior? Does salvation require a person to submit to Christ as master along with being the substitute for sin? Those who teach "Lordship salvation" answer "yes" but carefully note that they do not teach salvation by works or even faith plus works. Others disagree.¹

	Lordship	Mediating	Free Grace
<i>Key Advocate</i>	John MacArthur	Charles Ryrie	Zane Hodges
<i>Accept Christ as...</i>	Savior and Lord	Savior then Lord	Savior alone
<i>Nature of saving faith: What kind of response is required to the truth of the gospel?</i>	Intellectual (understanding of truth), emotional (conviction & affirmation of truth), and volitional (determination of the will to obey truth) ²	Intellectual and volitional ("an act of the will to trust in the <i>truth</i> which one has come to know" about Christ's forgiveness and vicarious death) ³	A conviction that Jesus is the Christ who guarantees eternal life (John 11:25-27; cf. 20:30-31) ⁴
<i>Simplicity of faith</i>	Authentic and insufficient faith are distinguished (e.g., counterfeit, temporary) ⁵	Faith is simple without various "types" as in the Lordship view	Faith is so simple it appropriates eternal life (1 John 5: 9-13) ⁶
<i>Repentance</i>	Turning to God from sin ("change of heart and purpose") to be saved ⁷	A "change of mind" about Christ ⁸	It " <i>may</i> precede salvation [but...] it <i>need not</i> do so" ⁹ ; faith alone saves.
<i>How saving faith and discipleship relate</i>	The two should not be distinguished ¹⁰	Discipleship <i>must</i> begin after salvation	Discipleship <i>may</i> begin after salvation ¹¹ but lacking it affects rewards
<i>Post-salvation works</i>	Demonstrate salvation ¹²	Demonstrate faith	Demonstrate discipleship
<i>Meaning of "Lord"</i>	Sovereign master ¹³	God (deity) ¹⁴	Messianic title
<i>One who "used to be a Christian" but no longer believes</i>	He never was a Christian in the first place ¹⁵	A believer in Jesus Christ may stop believing ¹⁶	A believer in Jesus Christ may stop believing ¹⁷
<i>Counsel to a genuine believer with doubts</i>	"Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith..." (2 Cor. 13:5a)	Examine the promises of God that you are a believer (1 John 5:13)	Examine the promises of God that you are a believer (1 John 5:13)
<i>Assurance</i>	Conditional ¹⁸	Divinely promised ¹⁹	Unconditional ²⁰
<i>Perseverance</i> ²¹	True believers will persevere in the end ²²	Believers can fail to persevere in the end	Believers can fail to persevere in the end ²³
<i>Carnal Christians</i>	Possible for a time ²⁴	Possible for lifetime ²⁵	Possible for a lifetime
<i>Key objection to the other two views</i>	"You can accept Christ as Savior now but Lord later" produces only <i>professing</i> "Christians" with false assurance ²⁶	Lordship theology adds confusing and unbiblical terms to the simple gospel message	Salvation is absolutely free and as a gift it has no other condition than faith, so lordship theology distorts the simple gospel
<i>Problems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blurs faith for salvation and works as disciple²⁷ • Leaves no option of an immature Christian²⁸ • Lordship has degrees²⁹ • Carnal Christians exist • Assurance is illusive • Experience refutes³⁰ • Denies sin unto death³¹ 	Lordship advocates say true repentance is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a decision to change behavior³² • part of the gospel³³ • often linked with faith³⁴ • noted alone for salvation³⁵ 	Lordship advocates say: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It overlooks the danger of false professions • This is "cheap grace" or "easy believism" • It has the same problems with repentance as the Moderate view

Endnotes

¹ This study summarizes Randall C. Gleason, "The Lordship Salvation Debate," in *Principles of Leadership: What We Can Learn from the Life and Ministry of Bill Bright*, eds. Ted Martin and Michael Cozzens (Orlando: New Life, 2001): 377-97. The sources for the chart are John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988); Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great a Salvation: What it Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Victor, 1989); Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989). The sources in the following footnotes are all cited in Gleason's article.

² Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Lord of the Saved: Getting to the Heart of the Lordship Debate* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 20.

³ Ryrie, 121.

⁴ Hodges, 37-39. He also notes, "It is an unproductive waste of time to employ the popular categories—intellect, emotion, or will—as a way of analyzing the mechanics of faith... But is [faith] mere intellectual assent? Of course not! . . . What faith is, in biblical language, is receiving the testimony of God. It is the *inward conviction* that what God says to us in the gospel is true. That—and that alone—is saving faith" (Hodges, 31 *italics* his).

⁵ Earl D. Radmacher, in MacArthur, *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 38-39.

⁶ Hodges, 40.

⁷ MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 88; *idem.*, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 164; cf. Gentry, *Lord of the Saved*, 46-47.

⁸ Ryrie, 99; cf. Thomas L. Constable, "The Gospel Message," *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Donald Campbell (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 207-8; Livingston Blauvelt, Jr., "Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salvation?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (Jan.-Mar. 1986), 41-42; Robert P. Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation* (Nashville: Nelson, 1991), 212.

⁹ Hodges, 146 (*italics* his). On this page he notes that while repentance is not a condition for *salvation*, it is a condition for *fellowship* with God. He also notes that, while John's gospel explicitly claims to do evangelism (20:30-31), it never once mentions repentance (Hodges, 147-48)!

¹⁰ The Lordship view claims that saving faith should not be contrasted with discipleship, including "repentance, surrender, and the supernatural eagerness to obey" (MacArthur, 30-31). Since believers in Acts were called disciples and the church's commission is to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20), he sees little if any distinction between the two.

¹¹ Non-Lordship advocates often note that faith is a gift but discipleship is costly (e.g., Hodges, 67-76).

¹² "Faith encompasses obedience" and "obedience is... an integral part of saving faith" (MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 173, 174).

¹³ MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* 206-10; Gentry, *Lord of the Saved*, 59-65.

¹⁴ Texts relating to salvation often employ the meaning of deity when the word "Lord" is used (e.g., Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Ryrie, 70, 73; *ibid.*, *Balancing the Christian Life* [Chicago: Moody, 1969], 173-76). While this certainly includes the concept of sovereign ruler, the difficulty with the Lordship view is that people accept his personal lordship to varying degrees, so how much submission is enough for salvation?

¹⁵ MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 17.

¹⁶ Ryrie, 141.

¹⁷ Hodges, 107-11.

¹⁸ All three positions above teach "once saved, always saved" (i.e., eternal security). While noting that assurance is available based upon scriptural promises, MacArthur also claims that it is conditioned upon the pursuit of holiness and the fruit of the Spirit (*Faith Works*, 202-12).

¹⁹ Some see assurance as primarily based on the promises of God's Word but secondarily based on the evidence of a transformed life (Ryrie, 143-44; cf. Lightner, 244-47).

²⁰ Hodges, 93-99; *idem.*, *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1981), 10. This is not to say that believers should not grow in their assurance by seeing their own spiritual growth (Heb. 6:11; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). However, assurance and security must be distinguished. Eternal security is the absolute certainty of a person's salvation from God's perspective. Assurance is the believer's awareness of his eternal security.

²¹ Perseverance means that "those who have true faith can lose that faith neither totally nor finally," as defined by Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989): 234. Agreeing with this definition is John F. MacArthur, "Perseverance of the Saints," *Master's Journal* 4 (Spring 1993): 8.

²² MacArthur teaches perseverance by saying that true saving faith endures since "believe" in the present tense shows continuous action and the abiding quality of faith as a gift given by God (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, 172-73).

²³ Perseverance is rejected but eternal security is accepted.

²⁴ "The concept of the 'carnal Christian' as a separate category of believers is not only misleading but harmful" (Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 21). This "theory" is "one of the most perverse teachings of our generation" (Ernest C. Reisinger, *Lord and Christ: The Implications of Lordship for Faith and Life* [Phillipsburg, PA: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992], 79).

²⁵ This believer is not the same as a non-Christian since he is included in the "we all... are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Nevertheless, Paul says the carnal Christian does exist (1 Cor. 2:14-3:3), but since he is a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:7) he will bear some fruit (Ryrie, 32-32).

²⁶ MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 17.

²⁷ Gleason, 380.

²⁸ MacArthur raises the standard for "saving faith" too high: "It clings to no cherished sins, no treasured possessions, no secret indulgences. It is an unconditional surrender, a willingness to do anything the Lord demands... It is a total abandonment of self-will, like the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies so that it can bear much fruit (cf. John 12:24). It is an exchange of all that we are for all that Christ is. And it denotes obedience, full surrender to the lordship of Christ. Nothing less can qualify as saving faith" (MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* 140). He summarizes, "Faith obeys. Unbelief rebels... There is no middle ground" (*ibid.*, 178). One wonders if *anyone* has the faith MacArthur describes. Besides, Scripture has many examples of Christians who have immature faith. The believer's faith must grow and mature (James 1:2-4). Moses was a man of great faith but he was disciplined for his rebellion (Num. 14:9; Deut. 9:23-24). Christ even called the disciples men "of little faith" (Matt. 8:26). Since believers often rebel, God disciplines (Heb. 12:4-13) and uses trials (1 Pet. 1:6-7) to mature their faith.

²⁹ As Christ is not the Lord of anyone in the complete sense, it is almost arbitrary to say whether someone has sufficiently accepted Him as Lord.

³⁰ Both Scripture and the experiences of believers show many persons who were genuinely saved and yet failed to follow Christ throughout life. These will suffer loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ and "be saved... as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). A classic example is Lot, who compromised his faith in God (Gen. 19) but still was deemed righteous in God's sight in 2 Peter 2:7-8 (see Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, 173).

³¹ The sin unto death (1 John 5:16, KJV) is a sin in the life of a believer so severe that God disciplines him by taking him to heaven by loss of physical life. Such was the case with the Exodus generation (Deut. 2:14), a sexually immoral man who would potentially die so that his "spirit may be saved" (1 Cor. 5:5), and believers abusing the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 11:30). MacArthur does not address this issue but insists that the sign of a true disciple is "when he does sin he *inevitably returns* to the Lord to receive forgiveness and cleansing" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, 104, emphasis mine). If MacArthur is correct, then why does God take the lives of some believers hopelessly caught in sin?

³² Acts 26:20; 2 Cor. 12:21; Rev. 2:21-22.

³³ Christ commanded his disciples to preach repentance (Luke 24:47). Peter and Paul preached repentance throughout their ministries (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20).

³⁴ Mark 1:15; Acts 11:17-18; 19:4; 20:21; Heb. 6:1.

³⁵ As only faith is sometimes noted as necessary for salvation (John 3:16; 6:28-29; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 10:9), so repentance alone is required in other verses (Acts 2:38-47; 3:19; 11:17-18). This shows that the two are opposite sides of the same coin. Such a view is supported in the Dallas Theological Seminary doctrinal statement.