Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Lordship Controversy
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: A293

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Introduction

No more important issue confronts the church than the controversy regarding the way of salvation. This, of course, is the most fundamental matter of all, for it ultimately determines how we present Christ to a lost world. Unlike questions about modes of baptism or systems of church leadership, this one has eternal implications.

Are we supposed to exhort unsaved people to receive Christ as Lord and Savior, or as Savior only? The difference may not seem like much, but the ramifications are enormous.

One has only to look at the feeble spiritual condition of the church today to see that something is seriously wrong. I'm convinced that at the root of the problem is a weakened gospel that presents Christ as Savior only and makes surrender to His lordship an option to be considered later.

The lordship of Christ is not peripheral to the gospel message. Surrender to Christ's lordship is the only acceptable response to the gospel, and any message that does not call sinners to submit to Jesus as Lord is not really the gospel. The Savior-only message that has been popularized in our generation falls far short of the message our Lord commissioned His disciples to preach.

The following is meant only as an introduction to the major issues of the lordship controversy. I intend to familiarize you with what is at stake in the controversy, and to suggest some of the key considerations about the nature of saving faith.

These words are excerpted, with minor adaptations, from my book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, which contains a much fuller treatment of the issue. The book includes in-depth studies of Jesus' major evangelistic encounters with individuals, His evangelistic sermons, and several of the parables He used to illustrate salvation to His disciples. It examines the meaning and place of faith, repentance, discipleship, and Jesus' lordship. I hope you'll want to read the entire book.

My prayer is that the Spirit of God will use what follows to whet your appetite to understand the gospel better, to articulate the truth more clearly, and to yield yourself to the lordship of Christ more

fully than ever.

A Look at the Issues

A subtle shift in emphasis over the past hundred years or so has gradually eroded the way evangelicals understand and present the gospel. Preaching and witnessing have changed. The message we're hearing is less challenging, more comforting. But is it the truth?

Listen to the typical gospel presentation nowadays. You'll hear sinners entreated with words like, "accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior"; "ask Jesus into your heart"; "invite Christ into your life"; or "make a decision for Christ." You may be so accustomed to hearing those phrases that it will surprise you to learn that none of them is based on biblical terminology. They are the products of a diluted gospel. It is not the gospel according to Jesus.

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. Jesus' message liberated people from the bondage of their sin while it confronted and condemned hypocrisy. It was an offer of eternal life and forgiveness for repentant sinners, but at the same time it was a rebuke to outwardly religious people whose lives were devoid of true righteous-ness. It put sinners on notice that they must turn from sin and embrace God's righteous-ness. It was in every sense good news, yet it was anything but easy-believism.

Our Lord's words about eternal life were invariably accompa-nied by warnings to those who might be tempted to take salvation lightly. He taught that the cost of following Him is high, that the way is narrow and few find it. He said many who call Him Lord will be forbidden from entering the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 7:13-23).

Present-day evangelicalism, by and large, ignores those warnings. The prevailing view of what constitutes saving faith continues to grow broader and more shallow, while the portrayal of Christ in preaching and witnessing becomes fuzzy. Anyone who claims to be a Christian can find evangelicals willing to accept a profession of faith, whether or not the person's behavior shows any evidence of commitment to Christ. Several decades ago the national media reported on the spectacle of a notorious pornographer who claimed to be "born again" yet continued to publish the worst kinds of smut. A well-known sports figure professed faith in Christ and was baptized in a highly publicized ceremony, then weeks later was accused and later convicted of rape. Another celebrity who claims to be a Christian is renowned for the profligacy of his lifestyle. What troubles me about all these is that many Christians insist such people really are born again and should be embraced by the rest of the church as true believers.

The Abandonment of Jesus' Gospel

One segment of evangelicalism even propounds the doctrine that conversion to Christ involves "no spiritual commit-ment whatsoever." [1] Those who hold this view of the gospel teach that Scripture promises salvation to anyone who simply believes the facts about Christ and claims eternal life. There need be no turning from sin, no resulting change in lifestyle, no commit-ment--not even a *willingness* to yield to Christ's lordship. [2] Those things, they say, amount to human works, which corrupt grace and have nothing to do with faith.

The fallout of such thinking is a deficient doctrine of salvation. It is justification without sanctification, and its impact on the church has been catastrophic. The community of professing believers is populated with people who have bought into a system that encourag-es shallow and ineffectual faith. Many sincerely believe they are saved, but their lives are utterly barren of any verifying fruit.

Jesus gave this sobering warning: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; *but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven*. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, *you who practice lawlessness*'" (Matthew 7:21-22, emphasis added). Clearly no past experience--not even prophesy-ing, casting out demons, or doing signs and wonders--can be viewed as evidence of salvation apart from a life of obedience.

Our Lord was not speaking about an isolated group of fringe followers. There will be "*many*" on that day who will stand before Him, stunned to learn they are not included in the kingdom. I fear that multitudes who now fill church pews in the mainstream of the evangelical movement will be among those turned away because they did not do the will of the Father.

Contemporary Christians have been conditioned to believe that because they recited a prayer, signed on a dotted line, walked an aisle, or had some other experience, they are saved and should never question their salvation. I have attended evangelism training seminars where counselors were taught to tell "converts" that any doubt about their salvation is satanic and should be dismissed. It is a widely held misconception that anyone who questions whether he is saved is challenging the integrity of God's Word.

What misguided thinking that is! Scripture encourages us to examine ourselves to determine if we are in the faith (2 Corinthi-ans 13:5). Peter wrote, "Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2 Peter 1:10). It is right to examine our lives and evaluate the fruit we bear, for "each tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:44).

The Bible teaches clearly that the evidence of God's work in a life is the inevitable fruit of transformed behavior (1 John 3:10). Faith that does not result in righteous living is dead and cannot save (James 2:14-17). [3] Professing Christians utterly lacking the fruit of true righteousness will find no biblical basis for assurance of salvation (1 John 2:4).

Real salvation is not only justification. It cannot be isolated from regeneration, sanctification, and ultimately glorifica-tion. Salvation is the work of God through which we are "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29, cf. Romans 13:11). Genuine assurance comes from seeing the Holy Spirit's transform-ing work in one's life, not from clinging to the memory of some experience.

Some Historical Background

In a study of Jesus' gospel, we cannot be concerned primarily with academic systems of theology or the views of specific theologians on a given doctrine. Nevertheless, in seeking to understand the issues, we must look at how the contemporary perspective of the gospel has evolved.

Prior to the twentieth century, no serious theologian would have enter-tained the notion that it is possible to be saved yet see nothing of the outworking of regeneration in one's lifestyle or behavior. [4] In 1918 Lewis Sperry Chafer published *He That Is Spiritual*, articu-lating the concept that 1 Corinthians 2:15--3:3 speaks of two classes of Chris-tians: carnal and spiritual. Chafer wrote, "The 'carnal' Christian is... characterized by a 'walk' that is on the same plane as that of the 'natural' [unsaved] man." [5] That was a foreign concept to most Christians in Dr. Chafer's generation, [6] but it has become a central premise for a large segment of the church today. Dr. Chafer's doctrine of spirituality, along with some of his other teachings, have become the basis of a whole new way of looking at the gospel. It is therefore essential to confront what he taught.

Chafer's dichotomy between carnal and spiritual Christians was seen by Dr. B. B. Warfield as an echo of "the jargon of the Higher Life teachers," [7] who taught that a higher plane of victori-ous living was available to Christians who would lay hold of it by faith. This idea of two classes of believers was undoubt-edly an unfortunate result of Chafer's predilection for dispensationalist distinctions. It is a classic example of how dispen-sationalism's methodology can be carried too far.

Dispensationalism is a fundamentally correct system of under-stand-ing God's program through the ages. Its chief element is a recogni-tion that God's plan for Israel is not superseded by or swallowed up in His program for the church. Israel and the church are separate entities, and God will restore national Israel under the earthly rule of Jesus as Messiah. I accept and affirm that tenet, because it emerges from a consistently literal interpre-tation of Scripture (while still recognizing the presence of legitimate metaphor in the Bible). And in that regard, I consider myself a traditional premillennial dispensa-tionalist. [8]

Dr. Chafer was an early and articulate spokesman for dispensa-tionalism, and his teachings helped chart the course for much of the movement. He was a brilliant man, gifted with both a keen analyti-cal mind and the ability to communicate clearly. The systematic methodology of traditional dispensationalism is in part his legacy.

There is a tendency, however, for dispensationalists to get carried away with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they make unbiblical differentiations. An almost obsessive desire to catego-rize and contrast related truths has carried various dispen-sationalist interpret-ers far beyond the legitimate distinction between Israel and the church. Many would also draw hard lines between salvation and discipleship, the church and the kingdom, Christ's preaching and the apostolic message, faith and repen-tance, and the age of law and the age of grace.

The age-of-law/age-of-grace division in particular has wreaked havoc on dispensationalist theology and contributed to confusion about the doctrine of salvation. Of course, there *is* an important distinction to be made between law and grace. But it is wrong to conclude, as Chafer apparently did, that law and grace are mutually exclusive in the program of God for any age. [9] Actually, elements of both law and grace are part of the program of God in every dispensation. Most critical is this truth: Salvation has *always* been by grace through faith, not by the works of the law (Galatians 2:16). Clearly, even Old Testament saints who preceded or were under the Mosaic Law were saved by grace through faith (Romans 4:3, 6-8, 16). Just as clearly, New Testament saints have a law to fulfill (1 Corinthians 7:19; 9:21; Galatians 6:2). That is not "careless co-mingling" [10] of law and grace, as Chafer implied. It is basic biblical truth.

Chafer's view of all Scripture was colored by his desire to maintain a stark distinction between the age of "pure grace" (the church age) and the two ages of "pure law" (the Mosaic era and the millennial kingdom) he saw sandwiching it. [11] He wrote, for exam-ple, that the Sermon on the Mount was part of "the Gospel of the kingdom," the "Manifesto of the King." [12] He believed its purpose was to declare "the essential character of the [millennial] kingdom." He judged it to be law, not grace, and concluded it made no reference to either salvation or grace. "Such a complete omission of any reference to any feature of the present age of grace, is a fact which should be carefully weighed," he wrote. [13]

Other dispensationalist writers did weigh those ideas and went on to state in more explicit terms what Chafer only hinted at: that the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount "have no application to the Christian, but only to those who are under the Law, and therefore must apply to another Dispensation than this." [14] This lamentable hermeneutic is widely applied in varying degrees to much of our Lord's earthly teaching, emasculating the message of the gospels. [15]

It is no wonder that the evangelistic message growing out of such a system differs sharply from the gospel according to Jesus. If we begin with the presupposition that much of Christ's message was intended for another age, why should our gospel be the same as the one He preached?

But that is a dangerous and untenable presupposition. Jesus did not come to proclaim a message that would be invalid until the Tribulation or the Millennium. He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came to call sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13). He came so the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17). He proclaimed the saving gospel, not merely a manifesto for some future age. His gospel is the only message we are to preach.

Wrongly Dividing the Word

Let's look a little more closely at the dispensationalist tendency to make unwarranted contrasts between related or parallel truths. It *is* important that we delineate carefully between essentially different biblical axioms (2 Timothy 2:15). But it is also possible to go overboard. The unbridled zeal of some dispensation-alists for making dichotomies has led to a number of unfortunate impositions on the gospel.

For example, Jesus is both Savior and Lord (Luke 2:11), and no true believer would ever dispute that. "Savior" and "Lord" are separate offices, but we must be careful not to partition them in such a way that we divide Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:13). Nevertheless, loud voices from the dispensationalist camp are putting forth the teaching that it is possible to reject Christ as Lord yet receive Him as Savior.

Indeed, there are those who would have us believe that the *norm* for salvation is to accept Jesus as Savior without yielding to Him as Lord. They make the incredible claim that any other teaching amounts to a false gospel "because it subtly adds works to the clear and simple condition set forth in the Word of God." [16] They have tagged the view they oppose "lordship salvation."

Lordship salvation, defined by one who labels it heresy, is "the view that for salvation a person must trust Jesus Christ as his Savior from sin and must also commit himself to Christ as Lord of his life, submitting to His sovereign authority." [17]

It is astonishing that anyone would characterize that truth as unbiblical or heretical, but a growing chorus of voices is echoing the charge. The implication is that acknowledging Christ's lordship is a human work. That mistaken notion is backed by volumes of literature that speaks of people "making Jesus Christ Lord of their lives." [18]

We do not "make" Christ Lord; He *is* Lord! Those who will not receive Him as Lord are guilty of rejecting Him. "Faith" that rejects His sovereign authority is really unbelief. Conversely,

acknowledging His lordship is no more a human work than repentance (cf. 2 Timothy 2:25) or faith itself (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9). In fact, surrender to Christ is an important aspect of divinely-produced saving faith, not some-thing added to faith.

The two clearest statements on the way of salvation in all of Scripture both emphasize Jesus' lordship: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31); and "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:9). [19] Peter's sermon at Pentecost concluded with this declara-tion: "Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him *both Lord and Christ*--this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36, emphasis added). No promise of salvation is ever extended to those who refuse to accede to Christ's lordship. Thus there is no salvation except "lordship" salvation. [20]

Opponents of lordship salvation have gone to great lengths to make the claim that "Lord" in those verses does not mean "Master" but is a reference to His deity. [21] Even if that conten-tion is granted, it simply affirms that those who come to Christ for salvation must acknowledge He is God. The implications of that are even more demanding than if "Lord" only meant "Master"!

The fact is, "Lord" *does* mean "God" in all those verses. More precisely, it means "God who rules," [22] and that only bolsters the arguments for lordship salvation. No one who comes for salvation with genuine faith, sincerely believing that Jesus is the eternal, almighty, sovereign God, will willfully reject His authority. True faith is not lip service. Our Lord Himself pronounced condemna-tion on those who wor-shiped Him with their lips but not with their lives (Matthew 15:7-9). He does not become anyone's Savior until that person receives Him for who He is--Lord of all (Acts 10:36).

A. W. Tozer said, "The Lord will not save those whom He cannot command. He will not divide His offices. You cannot believe on a half-Christ. We take Him for what He is--the anointed Saviour and Lord who is King of kings and Lord of all lords! He would not be Who He is if He saved us and called us and chose us without the understanding that He can also guide and control our lives." [23]

Faith and True Discipleship

Those who teach that obedience and submission are extrane-ous to saving faith are forced to make a firm but unbiblical distinc-tion between salvation and discipleship. That is the only way they can explain the ministry of Jesus. This dichotomy, like that of the carnal/spiritual Christian, sets up two classes of Christians: believers only, and true disciples. Most who hold this position discard the evangelistic intent of virtually every recorded invitation of Jesus, saying those apply to discipleship, not to salvation. [24] One writer says of this view, "No distinction is more vital to theology, more basic to a correct understanding of the New Testament, or more relevant to every believer's life and wit-ness." [25]

On the contrary, no distinction has done so much to undermine the authority of Jesus' message. Are we to believe that when Jesus told the multitudes to deny themselves (Luke 14:26), to take up a cross (v. 27), and to forsake all and follow Him (v. 33), His words had no meaning whatsoever for the unsaved people in the crowd? How could that be true of One who said He came not to call the righteous but sinners (Matthew 9:13)?

James M. Boice, in his book, *Christ's Call to Discipleship,* writes with insight about the salvation/discipleship dichotomy, which he frankly describes as "defective theology":

This theology separates faith from discipleship and grace from obedi-ence. It teaches that Jesus can be received as one's Savior without being received as one's Lord.

This is a common defect in times of prosperity. In days of hardship, particularly persecution, those who are in the process of becoming Christians count the cost of discipleship carefully before taking up the cross of the Nazarene. Preachers do not beguile them with false promises of an easy life or indulgence of sins. But in good times, the cost does not seem so high, and people take the name of Christ without undergoing the radical transfor-mation of life that true conversion implies. [26]

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 unbe-lief. [27]

The gospel according to Jesus explicitly and unequivocally rules out easy-believism. To make all of our Lord's difficult demands apply only to a higher class of Christians blunts the force of His entire message. It makes room for a cheap and meaningless faith--a faith that may be exercised with absolutely no impact on the fleshly life of sin. That is not saving faith.

By Grace Through Faith

Salvation is solely by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). That truth is the biblical watershed for all we teach. But it means nothing if we begin with a misunderstanding of grace or a faulty definition of faith.

God's grace is not a static attribute whereby He passively accepts hardened, unrepentant sinners. Grace does not change a person's standing before God yet leave his character untouched. Real grace does not include, as Chafer claimed, "the Christian's liberty to do precisely as he chooses." [28] True grace, according to Scripture, teaches us "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:12). Grace is the power of God to fulfill our New Covenant duties (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:19), however inconsistently we obey at times. Clearly, grace does not grant permission to live in the flesh; it supplies power to live in the Spirit.

Faith, like grace, is not static. Saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is insepara-ble from repentance, surrender, and a supernatural longing to obey. None of those responses can be classified exclusively as a human work, any more than believing itself is solely a human effort.

Misunderstanding on that key point is at the heart of the error of those who reject lordship salvation. They assume that because Scripture contrasts faith and works, faith must be incompatible with works. They set faith in opposition to submission, yielded-ness, or turning from sin, and they categorize all the practical elements of salvation as human works. They stumble over the twin truths that salvation is a gift, yet it costs everything.

Those ideas are paradoxical, but they are not mutually exclusive. The same dissonance is seen in Jesus' own words, "I will give you rest," followed by "take My yoke upon you" (Matthew 11:28-29). The rest we enter into by faith is not a rest of inactivi-ty.

Salvation *is* a gift, but it is appropriated through a faith that goes beyond merely understanding and assenting to the truth. Demons have that kind of "faith" (James 2:19). True believers are character-ized by faith that is as repulsed by the life of sin as it is attracted to the mercy of the Savior. Drawn to Christ, they are drawn away *from* everything else. Jesus described genuine believers as "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3). They are like the repentant tax-gatherer, so broken he could not even look heaven-ward. He could only beat his breast and plead, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (Luke 18:13).

That man's desperate prayer is one of the clearest pictures of genuine, God-wrought repentance in all of Scripture. His plea was not in any sense a human work or an attempt at earning righteous-ness. On the contrary, it represented his total abandon-ment of confidence in religious works. As if to prove it he stood "some distance away" from the praying Pharisee. He understood that the only way he could ever be saved was by God's merciful grace. On that basis, having first come to the end of himself, he received salvation as a gift. Jesus said that man "went down to his house justified" (v. 14).

Our Lord's point in relating that account was to demonstrate that repentance is at the core of saving faith. The Greek word for repentance, *metanoia*, literally means "to think after." It implies a change of mind, and some who oppose lordship salvation have tried to limit its meaning to that. [29] But a definition of repen-tance cannot be drawn solely from the etymology of the Greek word.

Repentance as Jesus characterized it in this incident involves a recognition of one's utter sinfulness and a turning from self and sin to God (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:9). Far from being a human work, it is the inevitable result of *God's* work in a human heart. And it always represents the end of any human attempt to earn God's favor. It is much more than a mere change of mind--it involves a complete

change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction. It is a conversion in every sense of the word.

The Bible does not recognize "conversion" that lacks this radical change of direction (Luke 3:7-8). A true believer cannot remain rebellious--or even indifferent. Genuine faith will inevitably provoke some degree of obedience. In fact, Scripture often equates faith with obedi-ence (John 3:36; Romans 1:5; 16:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:8). [30] "By faith Abraham [the father of true faith]...obeyed" (Hebrews 11:8). That's the heart of the message of Hebrews 11, the great treatise on faith.

Faith and works are not incompatible. Jesus even calls the act of believing a work (John 6:29)--not merely a human work, but a gracious work of God in us. He brings us to faith, then enables and empowers us to believe unto obedience (cf. Romans 16:26).

It is precisely here that the key distinction must be made. Salvation by faith does not eliminate works *per se*. It does away with works that are the result of human effort alone (Ephesians 2:8). It abolishes any attempt to merit God's favor by our works (v. 9). But it does not deter God's foreordained purpose that our walk should be characterized by good works (v. 10).

We must remember above all that salvation is a sovereign work of God. Biblically it is defined by what it produces, not by what one does to get it. Works are *not* necessary to earn salvation. But true salvation wrought by God will not fail to produce the good works that are its fruit (cf. Matthew 7:17). No aspect of salvation is merited by human works, but it is all the work of God (Titus 3:5-7). Thus salvation cannot be defective in any dimen-sion. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). As a part of His saving work, God will produce repentance, faith, sanctifica-tion, yieldedness, obedience, and ultimately glorifica-tion. Since He is not dependent on human effort in producing those elements, an experience that lacks any of them cannot be the saving work of God.

If we are truly born of God, we have a faith that cannot fail to overcome the world (1 John 5:4). We may sin (1 John 2:1)--we *will* sin--but the process of sanctification can never stall complete-ly. God is at work in us (Philippians 2:13), and He will continue to perfect us until the day of Christ (Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessaloni-ans 5:23-24).

The Nature of True Faith

Both sides in the lordship controversy would agree that salvation is by grace through faith--and faith alone. No true believer is saying that sinners must add works to their faith in order to be saved. The real issue hinges on the definition of true faith. How does it differ from a false profession? What are its characteristics? And what does it produce in the life of a believer?

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!

That stanza, penned by Charlotte Elliot in the nineteenth century, has probably been used as background for the evangelistic invitation more than any other hymn in history. The thought those words convey is a glorious biblical reality: sinners may come to Christ just as they are--solely on the basis of repentant faith--and He will save them. The Lord's own wonderful promise is in John 3:16: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (emphasis added). Later He added, "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37).

The erosion of the gospel in our day has given this truth an insidious twist. The language of the modern message sounds vaguely similar to "Just as I Am," but the difference in meaning is profound. Sinners today hear not only that Christ will receive them as they are, but also that He will let them stay that way! Many erroneously believe they can come to Christ, receive absolution and immortality, then walk away to continue living life as they please, even choosing "to leave God out and live according to the old nature." [31]

Some years ago leaders of an international Christian youth organization asked me to preview a training film they produced. The subject was evangelism, and the film instructed youth workers *not* to tell unsaved young people they must obey Christ, give Him their hearts, surrender their lives, repent of their sins, submit to His lordship, or follow Him. Telling the unsaved they must do those things confuses the gospel message, the film said. It advocated giving only the objective facts about Jesus' death, (making no mention of the resurrection), and pressing on them the need to believe. The film concluded that the sum total of saving faith is understanding and accepting the facts of the gospel.

I once spoke at a Bible conference where a well-known Bible teacher brought a message on salvation. He suggested that telling unsaved people they must surrender to Christ is the same as preaching works. He defined salvation as the unconditional gift of everlast-ing life given to people who believe the facts about Christ, *whether they choose to obey Him or not*. One of his main points was that salvation may or may not alter a person's behav-ior. Trans-formed conduct is certainly desirable, he said, but even if no change in lifestyle occurs, the one who has believed the facts of the gospel can rest in the certainty of heaven.

Multitudes approach Christ on those terms. Thinking He will not confront their sin, they respond eagerly--but with no sense of the severity of their guilt before God, and with no desire to be freed from sin's bondage. They have been deceived by a corrupt-ed gospel. They have been told that faith alone will save them, but they neither understand nor possess real faith. The "faith" they are relying on is only intellectual acquiescence to a set of facts. It will not save.

Eternal Life from Dead Faith?

Not all faith is redemptive. James 2:14-16 says faith without works is dead and cannot save. [32] James de-scribes spurious faith as pure hypocrisy (v. 16), mere cognitive assent (v. 19), devoid of any verifying works (vv. 17-18)--no different from the demons' belief (v. 19). Obviously there is more to saving faith than merely conceding a set of facts. Faith without works is useless (v. 20).

Yet some in contemporary evangelicalism refuse to allow for any kind of relationship between faith and works. With this limitation, they are forced to receive virtually any profession of faith as the real thing. [33] At least one writer explicitly stated that dead faith *can* save. [34] Amazingly, one popular interpreta-tion of James 2 teaches that dead faith is actually *proof* of salva-tion. [35]

Others admit the inefficacy of "faith" that is no more than a barren, academic recognition of the truth, but balk at defining faith in terms that imply submission or commitment of one's life. [36] In fact, it is commonly believed that faith and commitment are innately discon-nected. [37] The typical idea of faith relegates it to a momentary act that takes place in the mind, a decision to believe the facts of the gospel--"nothing more than a response to a divine initiative." [38]

Herein lies the fallacy of today's popular approach to evange-lism. The gospel appeal is tacked onto a wholly inadequate explanation of what it means to believe. The modern definition of faith eliminates repentance; it erases the moral significance of believing; it obviates the work of God in the sinner's heart; it makes an ongoing trust in the Lord optional. Far from champion-ing the truth that human works have no place in salvation, modern easy-believism has made faith itself a wholly human work, a fragile, temporary attribute that may or may not endure. [39]

But it is not a biblical view of faith to say one may have it at the moment of salvation and never need to have it again. Paul's words in 2 Timothy 2:12 speak powerfully to this issue: "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him, if we deny Him, He also will deny us." Endurance is the mark of those who will reign with Christ in His kingdom. Clearly, enduring is a characteristic of true believers, while disloyalty and defection reveal a heart of unbelief. Those who deny Christ, He will deny. Paul goes on to say, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself" (v. 13). Thus God's faithfulness is a blessed comfort to loyal, abiding believers, but a frightening warning to false professors (cf. John 3:17-18).

Faith as Scripture Describes It

We have seen already that repentance is granted by God; it is not a human work (Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25). Likewise, faith is a supernatu-ral gift of God. Ephesians 2:8-9 is a familiar passage: "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." What is "the gift of God" Paul speaks of? Westcott calls it "the saving energy of faith." [40] However, the phrase "that not of your-selves" has no clear antecedent. The Greek pronoun translated "that" is neuter and the word for "faith" is feminine. The antecedent of *that*, it would seem, cannot be the word *faith*. The problem is, there is no clear antecedent in this passage. "That" might refer to the act of believing, employing an antecedent that is not stated but under-stood. It is also possible that Paul had in mind the entire pro-cess--grace, faith, and salva-tion--as the gift of God. Both possibilities certainly are in keeping with the context: "Even when we were dead in our transgres-sions, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (v. 5). Spiritually dead, we were helpless until God inter-vened to quicken us. Faith is an integral part of the "gift" His grace bestowed on us.

Consistently the Scriptures teach that faith is not conjured up by the human will but is a sovereignly granted gift of God. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). And "No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father" (v. 65). Acts 3:16 speaks of "the faith which comes through Him." Philippi-ans 1:29 says, "To you it has been granted for Christ's sake... to believe in Him." And Peter wrote to fellow believers as "those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours" (2 Peter 1:1). How do we know that faith is God's gift? Left to ourselves, no one would ever believe: "There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God" (Romans 3:11). "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (9:16). God draws the sinner to Christ and gives the ability to believe. Without that divinely generated faith, one cannot under-stand and approach the Savior. "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually ap-praised" (1 Corinthians 2:14). That is precisely why when Peter affirmed his faith in Christ as the Son of God, Jesus told him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). Faith is graciously given to believers by God Himself.

As a divine gift, faith is neither transient nor impotent. It has an abiding quality that guarantees it will endure to the end. The familiar words of Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous will live by his faith" (cf. Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38), speak not of a momentary act of believing, but of a living, enduring trust in God. Hebrews 3:14 emphasizes the permanence of genuine faith. Its very durability is proof of its reality: "We have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." The faith God gives can never evaporate. And the work of salvation cannot ultimately be thwarted. In Philippians 1:6 Paul wrote, "I am confident of this very thing, that He

who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (cf. also 1 Corinthians 1:8; Colossians 1:22-23).

The faith God graciously supplies produces both the volition and the ability to comply with His will (cf. Philippians 2:13: "God... is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"). Thus faith is insepara-ble from obedience. Berkhof sees three elements to genuine faith: An intellectual element (*notitia*), which is "a positive recogni-tion of the truth"; an emotion-al element (*assensus*), which includes "a deep convic-tion [and affirmation] of the truth"; and a volitional element (*fiducia*), which involves "a personal trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord, including a surrender... to Christ." [41] Modern popular theology tends to recognize *notitia* and often *assensus* but eliminate *fiducia*. Yet faith is not true faith if it lacks this attitude of surrender to Christ's authority.

Writing about the verb "to obey" (*peith*), W. E. Vine says,

Peith and *pisteu*, "to trust," are closely related etymo-log-ically; the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter, cp. Heb. 3:18, 19, where the disobedi-ence of the Israelites is said to be the evidence of their unbelief.... When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he believes God.... *Peith* in N. T. suggests an actual and outward result of the inward persua-sion and consequent faith. [42]

So the person who has believed will *yearn* to obey. Because we retain the vestiges of sinful flesh, no one will obey perfectly (cf. 2 Corinthi-ans 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:10), but the desire to do the will of God will be ever present in true believers (cf. Romans 7:18). [43] That is why faith and obedience are so closely linked throughout Scripture.

A concept of faith apart from surrender of the will corrupts the message of salvation. Paul spoke of the gospel as something to be obeyed (Romans 10:16, KJV; 2 Thessalonians 1:8). Here's how he characterized conversion: "Though you were the slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart" (Romans 6:17). The result he sought in his ministry of evangelism was "obedi-ence... by word and deed" (15:18). And he wrote repeatedly of "the obedience of faith" (1:5; 16:26).

Clearly, the biblical concept of faith is inseparable from obedi-ence. "Believe" is treated as if it were synonymous with "obey" in John 3:36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life." Acts 6:7 shows how salvation was understood in the early church: "A great many... were becoming obedient to the faith." Obedience is so closely related to saving faith that Hebrews 5:9 uses it as a synonym: "Having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." Hebrews 11, the great treatise on faith, presents obedi-ence and faith as inseparable: "By faith... Abraham obeyed" (v. 8)--and not just Abraham. All the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 showed their faith by obedience.

Obedience is the inevitable manifestation of true faith. Paul recognized this when he wrote to Titus about "those who are defiled and unbelieving.... They profess to know God but by their deeds they deny Him" (Titus 1:15-16). [44] To Paul, their perpetual disobedi-ence proved their disbelief. Their actions denied God more loudly than their words proclaimed Him. This is characteristic of unbelief, not faith, for true faith always embodies righteous works. As the Reformers were fond of saying, we are justified by faith alone, but justifying faith is never alone. Spurgeon said, "Although we are sure that men are not saved for the sake of their works, yet we are equally sure that no man will be saved without them." [45] True faith is manifest only in obedi-ence.

Faith and faithfulness were not substantially different concepts to the first-century Christian. In fact, the same word is translated both ways in our English Bibles. [46] Writing on "faith" in his commentary on Galatians, Lightfoot says,

The Greek *pistis*... and the English "faith" hover between two meanings; *trustfulness*, the frame of mind which relies on another; and *trustworthi-ness*, the frame of mind which can be relied upon. Not only are the two connected together grammatically, as active and passive sense of the same word, or logically, as subject and object of the same act; but there is a close moral affinity between them. Fidelity, constan-cy, firmness, confidence, reliance, trust, belief--these are the links which connect the two extremes, the passive with the active meaning of "faith." Owing to these combined causes, the two senses will at times be so blended together that they can only be separated by some arbitrary distinc-tion... In all such cases it is better to accept the latitude, and even the vagueness, of a word or phrase, than to attempt a rigid definition.... And indeed the loss in grammatical precision is often more than compensated by the gain in theological depth. In the case of "the faithful" for instance, does not the one quality of heart carry the other with it, so that they who are trustful are trusty also; they who have faith in God are stedfast and unmov-able in the path of duty? [47]

And so the faithful (believing) are also faithful (obedient). "Fidelity, constancy, firmness, confidence, reliance, trust, [and] belief" are all indivisibly wrapped up in the idea of believing. Righteous living is an inevitable by-product of real faith (Romans 10:10).

Of course, that is not to say that faith results in anything like sinless perfection. All true believers understand the plea of the demon-possessed boy's father, "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Those who believe *will* desire to obey, however imperfectly they may follow through at times. So-called "faith" in God that does not produce this yearning to submit to His will is not faith at all. The state of mind that refuses obedience is pure and simple unbelief.

Faith as Jesus Presented It

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) reveal the character of true faith as well as any passage of Scripture I know. [48] These traits--poverty of spirit, hunger and thirst for righteousness, purity of heart, and so on--are not just an unobtain-able legal standard. These are charac-teris-tics common to all who believe. The first of the Beatitudes leaves no doubt about whom the Lord is speaking: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:3, emphasis added). He is describing redeemed people, those who have believed, those who are part of the kingdom. Here is what their faith is like.

Its foundational characteristic is humility--a poverty of spirit, a brokenness that acknowledges spiritual bankruptcy. Genuine believers see themselves as sinners; they know they have nothing to offer God that will buy His favor. That is why they mourn (v. 4), with the sorrow that accompa-nies true repentance. It crushes the believer into meekness (v. 5). He hungers and thirsts for righteous-ness (v. 6). As the Lord satisfies that hunger, He makes the believing one merciful (v. 6), pure in heart (v. 7), and a peacemaker (v. 9). The believer is ultimately persecuted and reviled for righ-teousness' sake (v. 10).

That is Jesus' description of the genuine believer. Each of the characteristics He names--starting with humility and reaching fruition in obedience--is a consequence of true faith. And note that the obedience of faith is more than external; it issues from the heart. That is one reason their righteousness is greater than the righteous-ness of the scribes and Pharisees (v. 20). Jesus goes on to character-ize true righteous-ness--the righteousness that is born of faith (cf. Romans 10:6)--as obedience not just to the letter of the law, but to the spirit of the law as well (Matthew 5:21-48). This kind of righteousness does not merely avoid acts of adultery; it goes so far as to avoid adulterous thoughts. It eschews hatred the same as murder.

If you see that God's standard is higher than you can possibly attain, you're on the road to the blessedness Jesus spoke of in the Beatitudes. It begins with the humility that grows out of a sense of utter spiritual poverty, the knowledge that we are poor in spirit. And it consum-mates inevitably in righteous obedience. Those are characteristics of a supernatural life. They are impossible apart from faith, and it is impossible that someone with true faith might be utterly lacking these characteristics that are common to everyone in the kingdom (Matthew 5:3).

When Jesus wanted to illustrate the character of saving faith, He took a little child, stood him in the midst of the disciples, and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mat-thew 18:3). A child was the perfect picture of obedient humili-ty, [49] an object lesson about saving faith.

Jesus used this illustration to teach that if we insist on retaining the privileges of adulthood--if we want to be our own boss, do our own thing, govern our own lives--we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. But if we are willing to come on the basis of childlike faith and receive salvation with the

humility of a child, with a willingness to surrender to Christ's authority, then we are coming with the right attitude.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they *follow* Me; and I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10:27-28, emphasis added). Who are the true sheep? The ones who follow. Who are the ones who follow? The ones who are given eternal life.

Faith obeys. Unbelief rebels. The direction of one's life should reveal whether that person is a believer or an unbeliever. There is no middle ground. [50] Merely knowing and affirming facts apart from obedi-ence to the truth is not believing in the biblical sense. Those who cling to the memory of a one-time decision of "faith" but lack any evidence of the outworking of faith had better heed the clear and solemn warning of Scripture: "He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

[1] Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: RedenciÃ³n Viva, 1981), p. 14.

[2] Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), pp. 169-70.

[3] James asks the rhetorical question, "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" (James 2:14). One branch of contemporary theology seems to be saying yes. Cf. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, pp. 19-33.

Nevertheless, James's message seems clear. Even the demons have faith enough to grasp the basic facts (v. 19), but that is not redeeming faith. "Faith without works is useless" (v. 20) and "faith without works is dead" (v. 26). Putting those three verses together, we must conclude that this is a description of ineffec-tual faith, not faith that was once alive but now has died.

[4] See Appendix 2, "The Gospel According to Historic Christianity," pp. 255-72, for an overview of the historic church's under-stand-ing of the relationship between faith and works.

[5] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zonder-van, 1967), p. 21.

[6] Those schooled in dispensationalist theology may be surprised to learn that Dr. Chafer's book was extremely controversial when first released. In a scathing review, Dr. B. B. Warfield took issue with Chafer's basic premise. While not denying the obvious truth that Chris-tians can behave in carnal ways, Warfield objected vigorously to the classification of carnality as a separate state of the spiritual life. Warfield makes some excellent points:

This teaching is indistinguishable from what is ordinarily under-stood by the doctrine of a "second blessing," "a second work of grace," "the higher life."

.....

The remainders of the flesh in the Christian do not consti-tute his charac-ter-istic. He is in the Spirit and is walking, with however halting steps, by the Spirit; and it is to all Christians, not to some, that the great promise is given, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," and the great assurance is added, "Because ye are not under the law but under grace." He who believes in Jesus Christ is under grace, and his whole course, in its process and in its issue alike, is determined by grace, and therefore, having been predes-tined to be conformed to the image of God's Son, he is surely being conformed to that image, God Himself seeing to it that he is not only called and justified but also glori-fied. You may find Christians at every stage of this process, for it is a process through which all must pass; but you will find none who will not in God's own good time and way pass through every stage of it. There are not two kinds of Christians, although there are Christians at every conceiv-able stage of advance-ment towards the one goal to which all are bound and at which all shall arrive.

Benjamin B. Warfield, review in *The Princeton Theological Review* (April 1919), pp. 322-27.

[7] Ibid., p. 322.

[8] A definition of biblical dispensationalism is given in Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispen-sation-alism Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), pp. 43-44.

[9] Chafer wrote,

In respect to the character of divine govern-ment, both the age before the cross and the age following the return of Christ represent the exercise of pure law; while the period between the two ages repre-sents the exercise of pure grace. It is imperative, therefore, that there shall be no careless co-mingling of these great age-characteriz-ing elements, else the preserva-tion of the most important distinc-tions in the various relationships between God and man are lost, and the recognition of the true force of the death of Christ and His coming again is obscured.

Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1922), p. 124.

[10] Ibid. It is noteworthy that *The New Scofield Reference Bible* places far more weight than Chafer did on the importance of the law and its ministry in the age of grace (New York: Oxford, 1967), pp. 3, 1254.

[11] Chafer, *Grace*, p. 124.

[12] Ibid., p. 138.

[13] Ibid., p. 139. Contrast this with Luther's statement that "the Sermon on the Mount is not Law, but Gospel." Cited in John R. W. Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture* (Down-ers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1978), p. 37.

[14] Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth* (Philadelphia: Larkin, 1918), p. 87. Larkin, whose books and charts are still in print and used by many dispen-sationalists, also pointed to the phrase "Thy kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer as proof the prayer is meant only "for those who shall be living in the 'Tribulation Period.'" His conclu-sion is unwarranted. The kingdom is also yet to come for those living today, before the Tribulation.

[15] It should be pointed out that many dispensationalists resent the criticism that they relegate the Sermon on the Mount and other teachings of Jesus to a future age. Most dispensation-alists will say they see *application* of the Sermon to the church age, but still stop short of saying its primary message is for Christians. Even Dr. Ryrie, who wrote a passionate counterattack to this charge, falls short of embracing the Sermon on the Mount as truth for today. After a lengthy defense of the traditional dispensationalist view of the Sermon on the Mount, Ryrie concludes that it cannot be applied "primarily and ful-ly... to the believer in this age" (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today,* p. 109). Yet virtually every detail in the Sermon is repeated in the epistles.

[16] Livingston Blauvelt, Jr., "Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salva-tion?" *Biblio-theca Sacra* (January-March 1986), p. 37.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 38.

[19] Some dispensationalists would confine the application of Romans 10:9-10 to unbeliev-ing Jews. It is true that Romans 9-11 deals with the question of Israel's rejection of the Messiah and the nation's place in God's eternal plan. But the soteriological significance of those verses cannot be limited to Israel alone, because of verses 12-13: "There is no distinc-tion between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

[20] I don't like the term "lordship salvation." It was coined by those who want to eliminate the idea of submission to Christ from the call to saving faith, and it implies that Jesus' lordship is a false addition to the gospel. As we shall see, however, "lordship salvation" is simply biblical and historic evan-gelical soteriol-ogy. I use the term in this volume only for the sake of argument.

[21] Ibid., pp. 38-41. See also G. Michael Cocoris, *Lordship Sal-vation--Is It Bibli-cal?* (Dallas: RedenciÃ³n Viva, 1983), pp. 13-15.

[22] Proper understanding of any biblical term depends on etymology, context, and history. Etymologically, *kurios* comes from a Greek root that means "rule, dominion, or power." Contextu-ally, taking Peter's use of *kurios* in Acts 2:36, it is important to note that verses 34-35 quote from Psalm 110, a messianic Psalm of rule and dominion ("Rule in the midst of Thine ene-mies," Psalm 110:2). Peter was not saying merely that "God has made Him... God"; he was affirm-ing Jesus' right to rule. Historical-ly, Peter's sermon addressed the Jews' role in crucifying their Messiah (Acts 2:23). At the trial of Jesus before Pilate and the Jewish mob, the issue was clearly His *kingship*, mentioned at least a dozen times in John 18:33--19:22. Clearly, careful historical-grammati-cal exegesis of Acts 2:36 can lead to only one conclusion: Jesus is the divine King who rules in the midst of both friends and foes. Having thus identified Christ as Lord of all, Peter makes his gospel appeal. Note carefully that Paul preached Jesus in exactly the same way (2 Corinthians 4:3-5): Jesus is our sovereign Lord, and we are His servants.

[23] A. W. Tozer, *I Call It Heresy!* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publica-tions, 1974), pp. 18-19.

[24] Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege,* 35-45; Cocoris, *Lordship Salvation--Is It Biblical?,* 15-16; Blauvelt, "Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salvation?," p. 41.

[25] Charles C. Ryrie in the foreword to Zane C. Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit* (Portland: Multnomah, 1980), p. 7.

[26] James M. Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), p. 14.

[27] Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 does not talk about making believers in distinction to disciples. "Make disci-ples... baptizing them" implies that every new believer is a disciple, for all Christians are to be baptized (Acts 2:38), not just those who go on to some deeper level of commit-ment.

[28] Chafer, *Grace,* 345. Chafer would be the last person to countenance lawless Christian living. Yet because of his extreme emphasis on "pure grace," he often made state-ments with a strange antinomian flavor that may have conveyed impressions he did not want to convey.

[29] Cocoris, *Lordship Salvation--Is It Biblical?,* 11. Also, Dr. Ryrie claims that repentance is "a change of mind about Jesus Christ so that He is believed and received as personal Saviour from sin." Repentance, by this definition, has nothing to do with one's attitude toward sin and does not necessarily result in any change in lifestyle. It is merely a Christolog-ical focus. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life,* pp. 175-76.

[30] Those who reject the lordship position often claim that texts such as Ro-mans 1:5 ("the obedience of faith") indicate that believing itself is the only obedience called for in salvation. By believing in the Son, we obey the Father's will (John 6:29). This is "the obedience of faith," they say; it is one-time obedi-ence to the Father, not lasting obedience to the command-ments of Christ. But obedience to Christ's authority is clearly enjoined by texts such as John 3:36 ("He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him") and Hebrews 5:9 ("[Christ] became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation").

[31] Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 35.

[32] The question of James 2:14, introduced by the Greek particle *m*, gram-mati-cal-ly pre-sumes a negative answer: "Can that faith save him? Of course not!" Cf. A. T. Robert-son, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broad-man, 1933), 6:34.

[33] "One gets the impression that [they see] no distinction." Johnny V. Miller, review of *The Gospel Under Siege*, *Trinity Journal* 4 (Spring 1983), pp. 93-94.

[34] A. Ray Stanford, *Handbook of Personal Evangelism* (Holly-wood, Fla.: Florida Bible College, n.d.), pp. 102-3.

[35] Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, p. 19. Hodges postulates that in order for faith to be dead, it must have been alive at one time (p. 20). He theorizes that the salvation spoken of in James 2:14 means deliver-ance from the temporal consequences of sin, not eternal salvation (p. 23). Thus he concludes that James is talking to re-deemed people beset by dead orthodoxy--in Hodges' words, their faith has become "little more than a creedal corpse" (p. 33). Though their faith has lapsed, Hodges believes their eternal salvation is secure. The fact that their faith is dead, he says, simply proves it was once alive--and therefore they must be saved. But that is skewed logic. "Dead faith" does not necessitate faith that was once alive, any more than Ephesians 2:1 ("You were dead in your trespasses and sins") implies that individual sinners were once spiritual-ly alive.

[36] Cf. Livingston Blauvelt, Jr., "Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salvation?," pp. 37-45. Blauvelt begins his article with a recognition that intellectual assent is not saving faith: "Many people 'say' they have faith (James 2:14) but have no genuine conversion. Mere verbal assent or mental acquiescence to the fact of Christ's death, without any conviction of personal sin, is inadequate" (p. 37). But Blauvelt's entire discussion of the true na-ture of faith consists only of four paragraphs arguing that saving faith has nothing to do with commit-ment, after which he writes, "The term faith in the New Testament sense involves believing that Jesus of Nazareth is Christ the Son of God and that He died for one's sins and rose from the dead (John 20:31; 1 Corin-thians 15:3-4). Faith is trusting Christ for everlasting life" (p. 43). It is difficult to see how such faith apart from any kind of commitment to Christ

differs from "mere verbal assent or mental acquiescence."

[37] Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 170. Here Dr. Ryrie writes, "The message of faith plus commitment of life... cannot be the gospel."

[38] Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, p. 21. Although this book is labeled "a study on faith and works," this brief statement is as close as Hodges comes in the book to giving a definition of faith: "Faith, as we have perceived it in the simple, direct state-ments of the Bible about the saving transaction, is nothing more than a re-sponse to a divine initiative. It is the means by which the gift of life is re-ceived."

[39] Shockingly, Hodges writes, "It is widely held in modern Christendom that the faith of a genuine Christian cannot fail. But this is not an assertion that can be verified from the New Testament" (ibid., p. 68); and, "There is nothing to support the view that persever-ance in the faith is an inevitable outcome of true salvation" (p. 83). Contrast that statement with Paul's inspired words in Colossians 1:22-23: "He has now recon-ciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--*if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel*" (emphasis added). What is that but a guarantee that if faith is genuine, it will endure to the end? Cf. also 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:14; 4:14; 6:11-12; 12:14; James 1:2; 1 John 2:19.

[40] B. F. Westcott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Minneap-olis: Klock and Klock, n.d., reprint of 1906 volume), p. 32.

[41] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), pp. 503-5. Berkhof seems to borrow heavily here from Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), 837-38. Strong is as explicit as Berkhof in defining the volitional element of faith, *fiducia*. He says it involves "surren-der of the soul, as guilty and defiled, to Christ's gover-nance." Thus we find "lordship salvation" at the very heart of the definition of faith.

[42] W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1981), 3:124.

[43] Romans 7 is the classic text describing the believer's struggle with his sinful flesh. Note that while Paul acknowledged his own disobedience, he wrote that the desire to do good was his consuming passion: "I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate" (v. 15); "The wishing [to do good] is present in me" (v. 18); "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man" (v. 22); and "I myself with my mind am serving the law of God" (v. 25).

Though the apostle Paul described himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), those who love reveling in debauch-ery will not find a kindred spirit in him.

[44] Incredibly, Zane Hodges asserts that Paul was describing true believers when he wrote those words to Titus (*The Gospel Under Siege*, p. 96). He writes, "The people Paul has in mind in Titus 1:16 are evidently the same as those of whom he says in verse 13: 'Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.' The Greek word for 'sound' means to be healthy. Hence, the persons he thinks of are not individuals who are not 'in the faith' at all. Rather, they are people whom he regards as spiritually 'sick' and who need a rebuke designed to restore them to good health."

That completely ignores the fact that Paul referred to these people as "defiled an unbelieving, [with] both their mind and their cons-cience... defiled" (v. 15); and "detest-able and disobedi-ent... worthless for any good deed" (v. 16). That cannot be a descrip-tion of the children of God.

[45] Charles H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Zonder-van, 1962 reprint of 1858 volume), 4:265.

[46] Cf. Galatians 5:22, where *pistis* as a fruit of the Spirit is rendered "faithful-ness." This is the same word translated "faith" in Ephe-sians 2:8: "By grace you have been saved through faith."

[47] J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zonder-van, n.d.), pp. 154-55.

[48] For a complete commentary on the Beatitudes, see John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1985), pp. 131-233. For a popular treat-ment of the same passage, see John MacArthur, *The Only Way to Happiness* (Chicago: Moody, 1998).

[49] Children, of course, do not *always* obey. But they are under the authority of another, and when they disobey, they are chastened.

[50] Again, this is not to deny the obvious truth that Christians can and do fall into sin. But even in the case of a sinning believer, the Spirit will operate by producing conviction, hatred for his sin, and some kind of desire for obedience. The idea that a true believer can continue in unbroken disobe-dience from the moment of conversion, without ever producing any righ-teous fruit whatso-ever, is foreign to Scripture.

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