

Does John MacArthur teach salvation by works in his book *Hard to Believe*?

Code: QA508

One paragraph in the first edition of *Hard to Believe* contained a glaring error that has the potential to mislead readers about the book's whole intent. The problematic passage is the opening paragraph of chapter 6 (page 93), which seems to suggest that salvation is the fruit of godly living. The truth is exactly the opposite.

The error was inadvertently introduced into the manuscript in the late stages of the editorial process, when (in order to simplify the book) four chapters were deleted from the original manuscript and one of the remaining chapters was severely abridged. John MacArthur approved the abridgments.

Apparently, however, in an effort to make a new transition that would smooth over the deletions, an editor involved in the process made significant revisions to the opening of chapter 6. Unfortunately, that change was not submitted to John for approval. We believe the error was an oversight, and not anyone's deliberate attempt to tamper with the book's theology. The result, however, severely muddled the message of the book.

A revision was sent to the publisher for future editions of the book. In all subsequent printings, here is how the opening paragraph of chapter six reads (revisions are in bold):

Don't believe anyone who says it's easy to become a Christian. Salvation for sinners cost God His own Son; it cost God's Son His life, and it'll cost you the same thing. Salvation **isn't gained by reciting mere words. Saving faith transforms the heart, and that in turn transforms behavior. Faith's fruit is seen in** actions, not intentions. There's no room for passive spectators: words without actions are empty and futile. Remember that what John saw in his vision of judgment was a Book of Life, not a book of Words or Book of Intellectual Musings. The life we live, not the words we speak, **reveals whether our faith is authentic.**

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