The Lordship of Christ: Introduction
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-20

Tonight I want to speak to you on a very, very important subject, the subject of the Lordship of Christ. In and of itself, apart from any issues, apart from any contemporary theological discussion in the church, the subject would stand alone. Certainly treating the subject of the Lordship of Christ should be a primary study for any believer. There is a sense in which I wish I didn't even have to discuss it from the vantage point that I have to discuss it tonight. I want to approach the subject from a sort of polemic viewpoint. That is I'd like to defend the Lordship of Christ against what I believe to be a current attack. I think this attack on the Lordship of Christ has been coming for a long time. I remember as a young boy hearing people say often to Christians, I heard preachers say it, speakers, teachers. They would say, "You need to make Christ Lord of your life." How many of you have heard somebody say that? You need to make Christ Lord of your life. Very – in fact almost everyone raised their hand.

"Christ has been my Savior," you hear people give testimony and say, "and now I want to make Him Lord of my life." Very often we would go to a conference or a retreat, or there would be some kind of a special emphasis meeting, and people would say, "Yes, I've been a Christian and Christ has been my Savior, but He's never been Lord of my life." And usually people like that are trying to explain how it can happen that at some time in their life they accepted Christ as Savior and nothing ever changed, basically. In fact, that might be an experience that many of you can identify with. You go back to some point in your life as a child or a young person when you "accepted Christ," made a decision for Christ, and you look at that as the moment of your salvation though basically nothing really changed in your life.

You came to another point in your life, a crisis point, and maybe someone told you that you needed to make Christ Lord of your life and you did that thinking that was some second step, and things changed. There are those people who claim that you can be saved and not make Christ Lord, not acknowledge that Christ is Lord, accepting Him only as Savior. There are people, many of them, myriads of them, thousands upon thousands of them, who claim they were saved at some point when they made a decision to believe. At that point they took total forgiveness. At that point they anticipated they received eternal life and they gave back absolutely nothing to God. Absolutely nothing. They were told they were Christians because they made a "decision." They were eager, believe me, to adopt the popular notion that you could have Jesus as Savior and not necessarily acknowledge His Lordship. Sometime later in their life they would get serious about living and at that time they could go from just being Christians to being Lordship Christians. This view is so popular that recently when I

was doing a Bible conference at one of the major Christian institutions in America, a man spoke to the student body every day for the week, which I did as well.

He said to them, “The point at which you really become a disciple, the point at which you really make Christ Lord of your life, usually comes sometime in your 30’s.” And I was shocked, to put it mildly, that he had just basically told a group of young people to put their spiritual commitment on hold until they reached their 30’s. He was holding to a view that it’s enough to accept Jesus as Savior. Take your forgiveness, take your guarantee of Heaven, and then live any way you want until you come to some crisis point, hopefully sooner than later, when you make Christ Lord.

Now let me tell you how pervasive this concept is, and I’ll explain it in further depth as we go. It is, frankly, behind almost all contemporary evangelism. Almost all contemporary evangelism reflects this mentality, whether it’s television evangelism, crusade evangelism, stadiums, tents, churches, whatever it is. Most evangelistic tracts and books and things like that are based upon this kind of thinking. Get people to make a decision. Get people in a moment of time to admit their need and to accept Christ, to receive Christ, to make a decision. And that will seal their eternal life and then tell them they can be sure they’re saved and pray that sometime in the future they’ll make Christ Lord. But until that time you could expect that there would not necessarily be any change I their life. In fact, in the process of getting these people to make a decision, you can use any technique you want, really. You do want to speak of the gospel. Admittedly, they do want to speak of the gospel. You want to use a lot of emotion. There is often subtle pressure and very often manipulation, singing multiplied verses of lilting songs endeavoring to get people moving. There is even the strategy in many, many evangelist crusades where people are instructed that when the invitation is begun, and this is pretty common in churches too, there are certain people selected to start coming down the aisles to get the flow going and what these people are doing is really priming the pump to get people in the flow to make it happen.

There are parents who cling to the fact that at some point in their child’s life they made a decision for Christ, and even though they are presently living in gross sin and defiance of God’s law and do not even acknowledge Jesus as Lord, they are still saved because of that decision. They’ve just never made Him lord. I’ve had parents say to me, “I know my son is a homosexual. He has chosen that lifestyle. I know my daughter has absolutely no regard for the things of Christ, but I know they were saved. I remember the time they made their decision.” Parents cling to this. Spouses may cling to this for their partner. Friends may cling to this for someone they love deeply. It conveys the idea that salvation is some momentary transaction that secures forever but doesn’t necessarily transform your life and does not involve acknowledging Jesus as Lord of your life and submitting your life to Him. That kind of thing is behind most contemporary evangelism. You listen. When do you hear someone say, “Are you willing to commit your life to following Jesus?” When do you hear someone say, “Are you willing to repent of your sin and bow your knee in submission to the Lordship of Christ? Are you willing to allow Jesus Christ to take over as King and Ruler of your life?” What you hear is accept

Christ, receive Christ, make a decision for Christ. Now I want you to understand that this is a major issue because I believe, in my cases, what it creates is a whole mass of people who think they're saved but they're not.

Now let me give you a little more insight into the issue. A popular Christian magazine recently published an article arguing that Jesus' Lordship is an inappropriate topic to bring up in the course of witnessing to the lost. It is inappropriate to talk of the Lordship of Christ, said the magazine. This is a magazine very, very well known. It said, and I'm quoting from the magazine, "Since the decision to make Christ Lord is possible only for those who have already trusted Him as Savior, the gospel presentation should not contain anything about yielding in submission to Christ as Lord to be obeyed." The gospel presentation should not contain anything about yielding in submission to Christ as Lord, said the magazine. You don't even want to talk about that. I watched a film this afternoon for the second time – I watched it a day ago – because the first time I watched it I couldn't believe what I was seeing. It was a film designed to instruct people how to lead someone to Christ. The film used some graphics, posed some questions and then asked if they were true or false.

Let me tell you what some of the questions were and what the answer was. In presenting the gospel, the narrator of the film said, "Should you ever ask these questions?" Here are the questions. Question 1: Should you say to someone, "Will you give your heart to Christ?" Answer: False. You never want to say that to anyone. You never want to ask anyone to give anything to Christ. You don't want to ask them to give their life to Christ. You just ask them to believe. Second question: Will you surrender your life to Christ? False. Don't ever ask anyone to surrender anything. Question 3: Will you commit your life to Christ? False. Don't ever ask anyone to do that. Question 4: Will you make Christ Lord of your life? Don't ever ask anyone to acknowledge that He has to be Lord of their life. Question 5: Will you repent of your sins? False. Don't ever ask anyone to repent of their sins. Question 6: Are you willing to forsake your sins? False. Don't ask anyone to do that. It is enough, then, said the narrator, to ask them, "Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins?" That is enough. That is enough? The devils believe and – what – and tremble.

Another Christian magazine recently carried an article entitled "This So-Called Lordship Salvation." The article began with a question. Here's the question: Must a person make Christ Lord or acknowledge Christ as Lord as a condition for salvation? No less than 10 times in the two-page article the author spoke of making Christ Lord of one's life. And of course in the view of the author it wasn't necessary to make Christ Lord to be saved, that's something you did later. You made Christ Lord. You took Him as Savior and later you made Him Lord. Ten times it said that in a two-page article. Nowhere in Scripture does it ever say a Christian is to make Christ Lord. If you're a Christian, He is Lord. And it does say, very explicitly in Scripture, that unless you acknowledge that fact that He is Lord, you could never be saved in the first place. That is obvious. Withholding the Lordship of Christ from someone, withholding from them the fact that they need to surrender their life to His leading, withholding from them that they need to confess and repent of their sin, is to damn the person to a

delusion that they are saved when they're not. Withholding the Lordship of Christ from someone while giving them the gospel is a complete contradiction. The Bible says that salvation is granted only to those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord and are willing to submit their life to Him. To say that you should never talk about that, that all a person has to do is believe that Jesus died for them doesn't say at all enough.

One writer, a writer who is leading the parade against the Lordship of Christ, who has probably written, I'm sure, more than anyone else on the subject and who is quoted quite frequently in my book, says against the Lordship of Christ this: "It is precisely this impressive fact that the Lord asks for no spiritual commitment that distinguishes the true gospel from all its counterfeits." Did you get that? He says, "It is precisely the fact that the Lord asks for no spiritual commitment that distinguishes the true gospel from all its counterfeits." In other words, if you ask anybody to commit their life to Christ and turn from their sin and follow Christ, be obedient to Him, you have a counterfeit gospel. Now this is pervasive, my friends. This is pervasive.

Another seminary professor wrote, "The essential message of good news that must be believed for salvation: 1. Man is a sinner, 2. Christ is Savior, 3. Christ died as man's substitute, 4. Christ rose from the dead. That's what you have to believe to be saved. The facts: man is a sinner, Christ is the Savior, Christ died, Christ rose. Simply believing, they say, those facts are all that is needed. Now these men say that if you inform an unbeliever that Christ has any sovereign right to rule their life you have – get this – corrupted the gospel. You get that? It's frightening. If you say to an unbeliever that Christ has a sovereign right to rule their life and they need to bow their knee to Him to be saved, you have corrupted the gospel. Another writer says, and I'm quoting, "It is possible, even probable, that when a believer, out of fellowship, falls for certain types of philosophy, if he is a logical thinker, he will become an unbelieving believer. Believers who are agnostics are still saved. They are still born again." Listen to this one, "You can even become an atheist, but if you once accept Christ as Savior you cannot lose your salvation even though you denied God." I don't believe you can lose your salvation, but I believe with all my heart that if you've got it you'll never be an unbelieving believer and you'll never deny God. Jesus said in Matthew 10, "You deny me before men and I'll" – what – "I'll deny you before my Father." Paul writing to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:12 – we studied it recently – he says, "If you deny Him," same idea, "He'll deny you." Salvation is forever, but only if it's real. But what this advocates is you can take Him as Savior, have no change in your life, even become an unbeliever, an agnostic, an atheist, because it's not necessarily going to change you.

I was absolutely shocked to discover the writer who was most prolific in this is saying that if you believe at the moment of salvation, you never need to believe again the rest of your life because it's only that moment that counts. Frightening. Let alone submit to the Lordship of Christ. You could even become an unbeliever, agnostic, atheist. He said, "Persevering in faith, that is continuing in belief, is not a factor of true salvation." It isn't? My Bible says in Colossians I that you're saved if you continue in – what – in the faith. Every call to discipleship, they say, every time Jesus says leave father and

mother and forsake all and follow me – he says that over and over again. Take up your cross, deny yourself, be willing to die. If you put your hand on the plow and look back you're not worthy to be my disciple. If you have to go and bury your father and you're not willing to follow me at all costs, you can't be my disciple. You know all those calls to discipleship, calls to death, calls to sacrifice, calls to lay your life down, calls to obedience, calls to submission. They say all of those are Jesus calling already redeemed people to the second step. So they take the whole ministry of Jesus and instead of it being evangelism, it becomes calls to people who are already saved to come to the second level. The problem with that is Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but" – what – "sinners to repentance. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost." You have just taken the Lord Jesus out of His evangelistic ministry if you have that view, but I'll tell you what. You can't hold to the non-Lordship view unless you do that to all those invitations of Christ because every call to discipleship He ever gave was so strong.

So Jesus isn't really evangelizing, He's calling Christians to come to the second level and make Him Lord, so it discards the evangelistic intent of our Lord's ministry and ignores the fact that He came to seek and to save the lost. This goes as far back, for example, as the *Systematic Theology* of Lewis Sperry Chafer, one-time president of Dallas Seminary, in which it says in Volume 3 page 385, "To impose a need, to surrender a life to God, as an added condition of salvation is most unreasonable. God's call to the unsaved is never said to be to the Lordship of Christ." God's call to the unsaved is never said to be to the Lordship of Christ? Another writer comes to the astonishing conclusion that it is a perversion of the gospel to invite an unsaved person to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Now this has been around a long time. I'm quoting from sources that are somewhat old. But it never reached the pervasive, widespread place that it has reached today and I think partly it's being crystallized maybe because I'm agitating the issue a little bit. But it needs to be brought out. Another writer, writing in a magazine called *Confident Living* which is Back to the Bible's magazine, says, "To present Christ as Lord to a non-Christian is to add to scriptural teaching concerning salvation." This is what's being espoused.

No turning from sin is necessary, no resulting change in lifestyle is necessary. No commitment, no yieldedness to Christ is necessary. How about, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation. All things have passed away and behold, new things have come." I'll tell you one that hit me the other day, I went back to the book where it was already finished and put it in there. 1 Peter 2:7 says, "To those who believe He is precious." Have you ever thought about that verse? I'll tell you whether a person is a Christian. Is Christ precious? To those who believe, He's what? He's precious. He precious. What does that mean? Valuable, costly, highly-prized. That's His Lordship. He's precious to the true believer. Now the fallout of all of this, and I could go on and on, there's so many other things to be said about it and so many other illustrations, but the fallout of all of this is defective doctrine. The fallout of all of this is a salvation that is less than what the Word of God teaches. The modern gospel is vague. The modern gospel holds out false hope to sinners who have a moment where they want to cash in on forgiveness, when they want to tie up Heaven in the future while continuing to live

any way they like. Maybe later they'll worry about Christ as Lord if they even know about that and they shouldn't know about it because nobody's supposed to tell them. You want to know the affect of this? 1.2 billion people say they're Christians. Do you believe that? Do you believe 1.2 billion people in the world are Christians? A Gallup poll, one third of all Americans are Christians. Do you know what that tells me? Millions of people are deceived. Millions of people are deceived. One of these writers said, "If we accept the fact that you must take Jesus as Lord to be saved, then only a few people will really be saved!" And an exclamation point. That is exactly what Jesus said. "The gate is narrow and" – what – "few there be that find it." One of the writers says, for example, that Paul's list of gross sinners and their vices, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, swindlers shall inherit the Kingdom of God." He says all of those are believers. Those are all Christians who don't inherit the Kingdom. They get in the Kingdom, but they don't inherit it. What does that mean? I don't know. First level people go there, second level people inherit. So I guess there's a poverty pocket in the Kingdom for the first level group.

He further says that the description of those people in Galatians 5, it says, "The deeds of the flesh are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissentions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing," things like this. The people that do those things, practicing them, will not inherit the Kingdom of God. He says those are Christians too, but they just don't inherit. In other words, the whole idea is to make room for people who made a decision, who at one moment in time did something – accepted, believed, whatever – and nothing ever changed in their life and we want them all to be saved. So where does it come from? Why are people doing this? I think there are two reasons for it. It really was born out of a major concern for grace. They wanted grace to be so gracious, that as one writer said, "If you dare God to save you, He'll have to save you. That's how gracious He is." They wanted grace to be so gracious that in one moment of time if any sinner said, "I believe," that God would instantly save him and save him forever no matter what.

And the second thing is I think the modern movement has been spawned because people are trying to develop a theology to save some people who died in unbelief who once made a decision. More people reject the doctrine of hell in order to get their relatives out of hell than any theological constraint. You say what do I mean by that. I mean the people who tend to deny eternal hell are the people who don't want to admit that somebody they love went there. So they want to deny the doctrine so they can get the people out in their own mind. The same thing is true of this theology. I think if it's borne of out of a confusion about people who once made a decision and then lived a life of denial of everything that supposedly they once decided to acknowledge, and they want to make sure they're saved for eternity, so they develop a theology that will embrace them into the Kingdom. They're in it they just don't inherit it, whatever distinction that is. That's why one of the books is titled *The Hungry Inherit*. The Beatitudes, then, refer to the second level Christians. The rest of the Christians don't inherit. The second level ones, they inherit. They possess some things the first level

people don't.

This has also been described as a carnal Christian, that the carnal Christian is the one who made the decision to save, took forgiveness, got the guarantee of Heaven, and then lives a life of total disarray with himself still on the throne. There used to be a little booklet that Campus Crusade put out. It had one circle with all kinds of chaos and self on the throne. That was the natural man unregenerate. The second circle had all kinds of chaos with self on the throne of the life and then the Holy Spirit stuck in the circle. That's the safe person. The Holy Spirit's there, He's just not in charge. The third circle had perfect order in the life, a little throne, and the Holy Spirit was on the throne and self was in the corner. That's the spiritual Christian. So it was reflecting a category of people who are saved but still rule their own life. And their life's in total chaos. Nothing's really transformed. It's the same chaos as in circle number one, the unregenerate, except the Holy Spirit's in there somewhere – but he doesn't have any control of anything. It's the same idea. Those are the people who don't inherit the Kingdom. Those are the people that haven't made Christ Lord in this particular view.

So the typical call to salvation comes like this, "Accept Jesus. Ask Jesus into your heart. Make a decision. Believe." And that seems to be it. Now all of those are biblical thoughts and concepts. It's not that in and of themselves they're lies, it's just that they're so incomplete. We hear people say, "Well, you need to pray to receive Christ." And then they say to someone who prays a little prayer, "Now you can be sure you're saved," and they give them a little assurance thing without talking about what kind of invitation Jesus would have used such as, "Follow me. Forsake all. Lay down your life. Submit to my authority. Turn from your sins. Repent. Obey." Over the next three weeks we're going to discuss the three major areas. The Bible speaks on this issue. What is the essence of saving faith? We're going to talk about that. What is the nature of true repentance? And what does it mean to be a disciple? We'll cover that in detail. Tonight I just want to introduce things to you. These are really what we have called "easy believe-ism" viewpoints. They want to make sure that salvation is simply and easily a matter of acknowledging Jesus as Savior. Another advocate writing in a theological journal says this: "It is heresy to hold the view that for salvation a person must trust Jesus as Savior from sin and must also commit himself to Christ as Lord of his life, submitting to His sovereign authority." It is heresy to believe that, he says.

They don't want the word commitment. They don't want the word surrender. They just want the word appropriate, believe, receive. One local pastor in our area, well known, has really an effective ministry says, "Saving faith is not the commitment of one's life to the Lord." They teach that genuine believers can succumb to apostasy. They can totally depart from the faith. Look at Mark chapter 8 verse 34: "He summoned the multitude of his disciples and said to them if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake in the gospel shall save it. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" Listen, this is an invitation to an unbeliever, not a Christian to the second level. This is talking to a guy who, if he doesn't act, is going to lose – what – his soul. What's

a man going to give in exchange for his soul? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the son of man will also be ashamed of him. If you have shame toward Christ He'll have shame toward you. But they say this is talking to carnal Christians trying to pull them to the next level of commitment to the Lordship of Christ. Not so. He's talking about people who, if they don't do this, are going to lose their eternal soul. Well, there are so many other illustrations. One of the writers writing on the offer of the gospel in John says – you remember when, in speaking with Nicodemus and that third chapter Jesus talks about the serpent being lifted up, and everyone who looked at the serpent was healed and if the Son of Man looks up and people look at Him they'll be forgiven and so forth. And God – that's said in John's gospel later on. And then in that chapter he talks about the fact that Jesus offers to Nicodemus the truth of the new birth.

Verse 14: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. And whoever believes may in Him have eternal life." And they say see, all you have to do is look and believe. Just look and believe. Just look and believe. Quoting from one of them who says, "There is no idea of committal of life, no question concerning the lift of the looker, no possibility of surrender to the object of the vision." Just look, believe, that's it. They go to John 4, the woman at the well, and they say all Jesus said was, "Drink." But what they forget is when the woman said, "Give me the water that I may drink," He didn't give it to her. He started to tell her about her – what – her sin. There was something yet to be covered. In Matthew chapter 13 verse 44 the parable is very similar, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field; which a man found and hid from joy. He goes and sells all that he has and buys the field." Another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls. On finding the one pearl of great value he sold all he had and bought it." A very simple parable. Man found something of value, sold everything he had, took it. I'm talking about salvation. One man stumbled across a field. Another man was searching for it all his life. Both found it and when they found it they sold all they had to have the treasure. It's a picture of the exchange, "I give up all I am for all He is."

What are you going to do with that parable? Well, if you going to hold to a non-Lordship salvation, and if you're going to believe that you don't have to give up anything, you can't have this parable, be a pagan or an unsaved man, giving up everything he is to receive everything Christ offers. So you interpret it this way: the thing buried in the field is the church, the person buying it is Christ. So the parable typically, by dispensation, has been that Jesus, finding the church, gives everything on the cross to buy the church. The problem with that is that the treasure was in the field and the pearl was of great price, and I defy anyone to ascertain that the unregenerate people in this world for whom Christ died were worth anything. Besides, it seems to me a rather obscure treatment. One very familiar writer to us who has even put together a very popular and wonderful study Bible says, "Christians can leave God out of their lives and live according to the old nature." It's the same kind of thing. All of this opposes the clear teaching of Scripture. They misunderstand grace. They're trying to accommodate, I believe, loved ones who have defected. They want to get more people into heaven so they want to stretch the gospel. But it just doesn't square with Scripture. It just doesn't square. It's

just not what the Bible teaches.

Underneath all the calls to salvation in Scripture, the underlying sovereign authoritative Lordship of Christ and it has to be acknowledged. I mean how would I feel, as a pastor, if I had to say to you, “Now I know some of you are only at level one. You haven’t made Christ Lord, so I don’t have anything to say to you because you’re just out there doing whatever you want. But for those of you who have come to the second level, you need to strengthen that commitment. You need to live out that commitment.” That doesn’t make sense. When you gave your heart and soul to Christ and submitted and bowed the knee before Him in submissive salvation and yielded your life to Him all under the power and the Spirit of God, you began a life in which he is Lord and progressively your life should be evidencing that obedience to His Lordship.

In the Book of Acts you have the apostolic preaching of the cross. In the Book of Acts you have the preaching pattern for the rest of the centuries of the church’s life. Ninety-two times in the Book of Acts Jesus is called Lord, two times called Savior. Dominantly, He is Lord. He is Lord. Lordship was at the very heart of the gospel preaching in the early church. The very heart of it was affirming His Lordship. Peter says in Acts 2, “It shall be that salvation comes to everyone who calls on the name of the” – what – “the Lord.” The Lord. There’s no question about it. It’s absolutely every place in the Scripture. “Believe in the Lord Jesus,” Acts 16:31 to the Philippian jailor, “and you shall be saved.” You shall be saved. And John, I want you to notice chapter 3 verse 36. Listen to this: “He who” – follow this thought – “He who believes in the Son has eternal life.” Listen to this: “But he who does not obey the Son shall not see life. Therefore, believing is tied to” – what – “obedience.” They’re inseparable. Absolutely inseparable. In Romans chapter 10 verse 9, “If you confess with your mouth, Jesus as” – what – “Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.” Verse 12: “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord” – verse 13 – “shall be saved.” He is Lord and Lordship implies that He is sovereign. It implies that he is in charge.

You go back through the gospels and the whole New Testament, and you have affirmation after affirmation of the Lordship. I was just thinking of chapter 14 of Romans, verse 9: “For to this end, Christ died and lived again that He might be” – what – “Lord.” He is Lord. That first evangelism outside of Israel, chapter 10 of Acts, verse 36: “The Word, which He sent to the sons of Israel, Peter said preaching, “Peace through Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all.” Now some have said, “Well, yes, yes, but Lord means deity. It just means deity. It just means God.” It does not mean sovereign master. It does not imply obedience. It does not imply surrender. It does not imply submission. It only means deity. You just have to believe that Jesus is God. You don’t have to submit to Him. In fact, one writer says that if you make *Kurios*, Lord, mean sovereign master, you divest the call to faith from His deity. That’s ridiculous. You can say Lord and mean both deity and sovereign master. That’s a strong man. Not so. It’s not necessary to eliminate the concept of deity from the word Lord just because it implies the idea of sovereign master. Lord does refer to deity. Lord does mean Jesus is God, but God means

he's in charge.

I was having lunch one day with one who holds this view. He said, "I believe *Kurios* simply means Jesus is God." I said, "Okay, let's accept that. I'll buy that. *Kurios* means he's God. Let me ask you a question. What does being God mean? Does it mean you're in charge? If it doesn't mean you're in charge, then it doesn't mean God." You don't gain anything saying that. If He's God, He's in charge. If He's deity, he's sovereign. It can't mean anything less. Thomas acknowledged it. What did Thomas say when he saw Jesus Christ after the resurrection? "My Lord and my God" – what do you think he meant? How do you think he used the word Lord, to refer to deity? Did he say, "My God and my God?" No. God acknowledged deity, Lord acknowledged – what – sovereignty. Inherent in the term is authority, dominion, the right to rule, the right to command, the obligation to be believed and obeyed. In 1 Timothy 1:16 it says, "And yet in this reason I found mercy in order that in me, as the foremost Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God…" I mean who is the only God? He is the King. He is the King. The person living in rebellion against that and not acknowledging Him as Lord, not affirming Him as Lord, not submitting his life to Him, can't be saved.

Then they say this, "Yeah," they say, "But McArthur, what you're teaching is human-works salvation." They're saying, "You see, you're saying that before a person can receive the grace of salvation, they have to, on their own, acknowledge Jesus as Lord and no dead human being, dead in sin, could ever do that. And so you're postulating a warped salvation. You have to repent. You have to acknowledge Jesus is Lord. Then you can be saved." No, I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that at all. I'll tell you what I'm saying. I'm saying what the Bible says, and what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12:3 is pretty clear: "Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says Jesus is accursed." Now watch this one: "And no one can say Jesus is Lord except by" – what – "the Holy Spirit." Repentance is not a human work. It's a work that God does. Now what we're saying is when God saves someone, he grants them repentance. He grants them the affirmation by His Spirit, that Jesus is Lord. Now we're going to talk about this in detail, but I want you to understand the issue.

John Flavel, the 17th century English Puritan, wrote: "The gospel offer of Christ includes all his offices. A gospel faith just so receives him to submit to Him as well as to be received by him, to imitate Him in the holiness of His life as well as to reap the purchases and fruit of His death, it must be an entire receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ." A.W. Tozer, to whom so many of us are indebted for wonderful writings wrote, and I quote him, "To urge men and women to believe in a divided Christ" – that is Savior but not Lord – "is bad teaching for no one can receive half of Christ or a third of Christ or a quarter of Christ. We are not saved by believing in an office or a work." What did he mean? We are saved by believing in a person; the fullness of all that He is as well as what He did. To see the issue in bold relief, very bold relief, we need to just look at one illustration in Matthew 19, and I'll close with this. And you know it well. We've gone over it.

In Matthew 19:16, here's the single best illustration of the evangelism of Jesus. Verse 16, "One came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good things shall I do that I may have eternal life? How may I have eternal life?" That's the question. How do I get eternal life? Jesus said, "Why are you asking me about what's good? There's only one who is good. If you want to enter your life" – do what – "keep the commandments." Is that the right answer? Is that the right answer? If somebody came to you and said what do I do to get eternal life, would you say keep the commandments? You say that's works, that's works, that's works. Why did Jesus say that? Why didn't he say, "Oh, believe, except make a decision." In a moment of time, believe. No, he said keep the commandments. He said, "Which ones?" verse 18. Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." He picked out the second half of the Decalogue of the 10 commandments. And he meant not only outwardly, but inwardly because of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, "Whatever the law said it said not only to action of a man, but to the thought life of a man."

So He said keep those commandments. The young man said, "All these things I have kept. What am I lacking?" See, he says when I look at my life, huh, I'm perfect. I don't murder. I don't hate anybody. I've never committed adultery. I've never had an evil thought about doing it. I've never stolen. I've never even coveted. I've never lied. I've never even thought about lying. I've perfectly honored my father and mother all my life and I've loved everybody as much as I love myself. Liar. Listen, if salvation was a matter of believing some facts and grabbing on and getting forgiveness in Heaven, Jesus would have said to the guy, "Here are the facts. Believe." But what He said to him is the first thing you have to do is acknowledge your what? Your sin and repent, and he wouldn't do it. He wouldn't do it.

Jesus then said to him, "All right" – verse 21 – "if you want to be complete and perfect, you want to get into God's Heaven, go sell your possession, give to the poor. You'll have treasure in Heaven and come and" – do what – "follow me." The first test is when you admit your sin. The second test, will you submit to my Lordship. And the first command I'm giving you is sell everything you have and give it to the poor. You say do you get saved by doing that? No, but you demonstrate whether you're willing to follow the commands of Christ. He said I don't want eternal life that bad and went away grieved. He owned much property. He took property, possessed his property and gained hell, tragically. Jesus wanted two things to come clear to that young man. When you want eternal life it is not as simple as just a decision, believing some facts. There must be an acknowledgment and turning from sin, and there must be a willingness to submit to my authority even if I ask you to do the most difficult thing in your life, to give up that which you love the most. Let's establish, number one, the depth of your sinfulness and, number two, the height of my sovereignty. That's the issue. The man left. That's a very, very lucid illustration. When you come to Christ and are truly saved, the Spirit of God will move on your spirit and you will call Jesus – what – Lord.

Next time we're going to look at the essence of saving faith; what is it, how does it operate. Let's pray together. Thank you, Father, for our time tonight in Your Word. Confirm these truths to our heart and help us, Lord, to be able to properly preach your saving truth that folks might not be deceived, but that they might be saved. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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