

QUESTION #6 – What is saving grace?

The Lordship salvation issue is such a dangerous issue because it pollutes grace. In order to understand this point, we need to understand what grace actually is. Biblically speaking, there are three grace observations we may make:

Grace Observation #1 - Saving grace has nothing to do with works .
Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 11:5-6

This point could not be stated any clearer. **If human works are involved in any fashion, it is not and cannot be grace.** The grace of God has absolutely no connection to what a person has or has not done or what a person is or isn't.

God's grace that saves is not earned, it is not based on achievement, and it is not a paycheck or reward given to someone who promises to be a disciple. God's grace has nothing to do with works in any way.

John MacArthur sees this differently. He writes: "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 unbelief" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 30). He also says "Salvation by faith does not eliminate works per se" (p. 33). That statement is heresy.

His concept of a call to Calvary is certainly not a call to grace, because grace has nothing to do with discipleship or works in any way.

Grace Observation #2 - Saving grace is a grace/gift that has nothing to do with debt or merit or obligation . **Romans 4:4-5**

The grace of God system is not a debt or merit system. In other words, the grace of God does not force us into an obligatory obedience. God's grace is always presented as a complete, free, grace gift system (**Romans 6:23; John 10:28**). In fact, in **Romans 5:15-21**, two words that Paul uses to describe salvation are "grace" and "gift." We could understand this as the great, grace gift of justification.

Proponents of Lordship salvation make commitment to follow Jesus Christ and obedience part of an obligation of saving faith. In fact, they say without this obligatory obedience it is "cheap and meaningless faith." Again, we cite MacArthur, "Saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is inseparable from repentance, surrender, and a supernatural eagerness to obey" (*Ibid.*, p. 31).

If repentance, surrender and obedience are connected in any way to saving faith, it is not a free grace gift. It would be something that would require certain things and that immediately makes it a debt issue.

Grace Observation #3 - Saving grace eliminates condemnation . Romans 7:24-8:1

When we read Paul's statement here it is very clear that Paul did not believe that removal of the condemnatory wrath of God could not in any way come through himself, which he classified as wretched. It is also clear that a critical point of saving grace is escaping condemnation. In other words, a key reason for saving grace is so that sinners may have everlasting life and not go to everlasting condemnation. The escape of condemnation is a critical point of the grace Gospel.

We have already established that in Paul's development of grace, it is a grace that is totally found in Jesus Christ and not in anything connected to us. It is not found in our commitments, our promises, our discipleship or our obedience; it is totally and completely found "in Christ Jesus." All the promises of God are "yes in Him" (II Cor. 1:20). Therefore, when one believes on Jesus Christ, one is completely exempt from the possibility of condemnation.

Lordship salvation misses this critical point of the grace Gospel and downplays escaping condemnation as a motive for simple faith in Christ. John MacArthur says, "A Christian is not one who simply buys "fire insurance," who signs up just to avoid an unpleasant afterlife. A Christian, as we have seen repeatedly, is one whose faith expresses itself in submission and obedience. A Christian is one who follows Christ, one who is committed unquestionably to Christ as Lord and Savior, one who desires to please God. ... The call to Christian discipleship explicitly demands just that kind of total dedication. It is full commitment, with nothing knowingly or deliberately held back" (*Ibid.*, p. 197).

Now from this statement several things are stated which are contrary to God's Word:

- 1) Saving grace is fire insurance and is a great reason for believing in Christ.
John 3:15-18; 5:24; Romans 5:9; Jude 23
- 2) A Christian is one who believes on Jesus Christ. Acts 11:21, 26
- 3) Some Christians don't submit and don't obey.
- 4) No believer unquestionably and totally submits to Christ as Lord all the time.

We may accurately understand saving grace to be the unearned and undeserved kindness and favor of God, which is a grace gift given to one who believes in Jesus Christ that totally and completely saves the sinner and delivers him from the wrath of God apart from any human works or merit or commitment or promises.

QUESTION #7 – When did the grace Gospel and grace dispensation begin and when will it end?

One of the reasons Lordship proponents lack proper grace understanding is because they lack proper grace dispensational understanding. People who believe in Lordship salvation ultimately attack dispensationalism, which is why they inevitably attack C.I. Scofield and Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer. This conclusion is obvious by direct statements and also by the very title of MacArthur's book: *The Gospel According to Jesus, What Does Jesus Mean When He Says "Follow Me."*