

QUESTION #7 – Who is responsible for this grace Gospel that we believe?

The Apostle Paul is very clear to establish that the Gospel he taught came directly to him as a revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12). So this teaches us that Jesus Christ, Himself, is responsible for giving the grace Gospel, and He gave us this grace Gospel through Paul.

Now it is obvious that Paul did not get this grace Gospel before he was saved on the road to Damascus in Acts 9 somewhere near the year A.D. 35. It is clear that in the next three years after this conversion, Jesus Christ personally appeared to Paul and revealed the grace Gospel to Paul.

This is why, when one carefully studies the New Testament, one is able to see that Paul uses the noun grace nearly ninety times, nearly four times more than all the other N.T. writers combined.

Paul specifically says that the Gospel is something that had been entrusted to him (I Tim. 1:11) and he actually called the Gospel “my gospel” (II Tim. 2:8). **Clearly, we must conclude that the grace Gospel is a Gospel from the Apostle Paul.**

The Lordship salvation message taught by John MacArthur relies heavily on a variety of verses that come out of the Gospels. In fact, the Gospel he cites the most in presenting his position is Matthew. He refers to verses from Matthew more than 138 times; Mark more than fifteen times; Luke more than forty-nine times and John more than 112 times.

We may conclude from this that the Lordship salvation theology that MacArthur teaches relies heavily on at least 314 verses found in Matthew–John, and he relies the most on teachings of Jesus found in Matthew.

But here is the problem. **The word “grace” does not show up in Matthew or Mark one time.** It only shows up in Luke eleven times and in John three times.

But when we check the word “grace” in Paul’s writings it shows up nearly ninety times: Romans (22); I Corinthians (8); II Corinthians (13); Galatians (7); Ephesians (12); Philippians (3); Colossians (5); I Thessalonians (2); II Thessalonians (4); I Timothy (3); II Timothy (4); Titus (4); Philemon (4).

Our conclusion, based on this biblical observation, is that to really grasp the grace Gospel, one would need to invest most of the time studying the writings of Paul because he is the one who said he got this grace Gospel directly from Jesus Christ and he uses the word grace more than any other writer.

Now if we carefully examine MacArthur’s book, you will discover that the two books that should be examined the most–Romans and Galatians, have references to fifty-two verses collectively.

If we compare that to 138 verses out of Matthew, it is obvious that he is looking at the wrong verses to formulate his grace Gospel concepts.

QUESTION #8 – What is Paul’s grace Gospel?

One does not have to be a great theologian in reading Paul’s writings to conclude that **the Gospel that Paul preached was one was saved by faith alone in Christ alone (Acts 16:31; 18:5; Rom. 3:26, 28, 30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9).**

If one were to communicate to people that they may be saved from sin and brought into a right relationship with God by simply believing on Jesus Christ, we would conclude they are presenting a pure and true Pauline grace Gospel.

However, if one preaches this grace message of simple faith in Jesus Christ, Lordship proponents will often suggest that this is presenting a message of “easy believism.” In fact, John MacArthur said that “The Gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow Him in submissive obedience...it was anything but easy believism” (*Ibid.*, p. 21).

Let us state very clearly that the grace message of believing on Jesus Christ is a message of easy believism and it is exactly what Paul taught. In other words, the simple message of grace that says if you will place your faith in Jesus Christ you will be saved is a message that is simple to understand and it is a simple thing to do.

However, it is not easy to get people to believe this. Those of us who have been involved in witnessing know that this is the most difficult message to get people to believe. In fact, it is anything but easy to try to convince someone, especially one religious, to stop trusting in their works and religion and only trust in Jesus Christ to save from sin. In order for this to actually happen, the Holy Spirit must bring the person under conviction so that he/she will simply believe (John 16:8-9).

So we would say that the message of believing on Jesus Christ is a message of free-grace, easy believism. **However, the theology behind that easy believism message is a very complicated system of doctrine that is rooted in the infinite riches of the unsearchable depths and wisdom of God (Romans 11:33).**

As we said in a previous study, it seems to me the Lordship proponents either lack or overlook the theology of the value of the death of Jesus Christ. When one ponders the rich theology of what is involved in actually saving a sinner, one is forced to realize it is only faith in Jesus Christ that could save. When one truly grasps grace theology, one realizes it could not possibly be anything connected to us at all that could make us right with a Holy God.

What Lordship salvation tends to neglect is that the entire relationship we have with God is by imputation. Frankly, it has nothing to do with us at all. Our entire status and relationship with God is due to imputation and this theological point puts an end to the Lordship debate. Sound, Pauline theology teaches that our saved status is by God’s grace imputation, not our Lordship decisions, commitments or submissive obedience.