

Another historical citation MacArthur uses comes from Clements' letter from Rome to the Corinthians (p. 222). The quote is actually given from a context that challenges believers to not be a friend of the world. But what he does not quote is this: "And so we, having been called through his will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we have done in holiness of heart, but through faith, by which the almighty God has justified all who have existed from the beginning; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (*Ibid.*, pp. 45-46). Clement taught free grace salvation.

Another person MacArthur claims supports his position is George Whitefield of the 1700's (pp. 230-231). He cites a quotation from Whitefield in which he was challenging unsaved ministers to true salvation and fruit from it. However, what he does not quote is what Whitefield actually taught about sin as it relates to justification and holiness.

In a letter to John Wesley, Wesley was becoming as confused on the justification–sanctification–holiness as John MacArthur and so Whitefield wrote Wesley to present sound doctrine and here is what he wrote:

"This is sent in answer to your letter dated March 25. I think, I have for some time known what it is to have righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. These, I believe, are the privileges of the sons of God: But I cannot say I am free from indwelling sin; ...I am sorry, honored Sir, to hear by many letters, that you seem to own a sinless perfection in this life attainable...I do not expect to say indwelling sin is finished and destroyed in me, till I bow down my head and give up the spirit. **I know many abuse this doctrine, and perhaps willfully indulge sin, or do not aspire after holiness, because no man is perfect in this life. But what of that? Must I therefore assert doctrines contrary to the Gospel? God forbid. ... O that you would study the covenant of grace. O that you were truly convinced of sin, and brought to the foot of sovereign grace.**" The clear belief of George Whitefield is that justification in grace is not the same as practical holiness or deliberate sinfulness. Justification is a judicial righteousness we receive in pure sovereign grace (Arnold Dalimore, *George Whitefield*, Vol. 1, p. 575).

Augustine believed that saving faith was nothing else than to think with assent and mentally believe understood propositions. John Calvin believed that saving faith was passive in that we simply receive salvation through simple faith in Christ. Martin Luther wrote that saving faith is "the sort of faith that does not look at its own works nor at its own strength and worthiness...but faith goes out of itself, clings to Christ and embraces Him..." (Cited from Thomas G. Lewellan, *Has Lordship Salvation Been Taught Throughout Church History?*, pp. 155-156).

The case from history is not as airtight as Lordship proponents would lead people to believe.

As we have said, the Lordship salvation controversy surrounds the matter of salvation by simple faith versus a salvation plus obedient works faith. **Lordship people teach salvation by grace and works, and grace teachers teach salvation by grace apart from any works.** The real theological point is whether or not "faith alone" can save a person, or is it "faith plus mandatory works or evidences" that saves a person?

**At the historical roots of this theological controversy lies the Roman Catholic Church.** Those who believe in Lordship salvation today are just basically siding with and snuggling up to the Roman Catholic Church (Dr. Norman Giesler, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, pp. 258-276).

The original doctrinal controversy began between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestants back in the 1500's. The argument over the simple faith in Jesus Christ and the faith plus works issue was the very controversy that led to the Protestant Reformation battle cry "justification by faith alone."

There was a city named "Trento" that was located about seventy miles northwest of Venice which held a series of theological meetings among Catholic leaders for the purpose of confirming and restating the Catholic doctrines. This meeting was called the "Council of Trent." From the years (1545 to 1563) several theological meetings were held in this city.

**The salvation pronouncements of the Roman Catholic Church, which came from the Council of Trent, included the belief that in order to be saved one must have faith plus good works.** Faith in Jesus Christ was not enough, but one had to demonstrate good works or else one was not truly saved. **The Catholic Church took the position that doing good works was part of the condition for salvation faith. The Catholics concluded that justification was not only a man being declared righteous, but it also included a man actually becoming righteous.** This was called "meritorious justification."

The main verses they used to support their position were: 1) Matthew 5:12; 2) Matthew 25:34-35; 3) Romans 2:6-7; 4) I Corinthians 3:8; 5) Philippians 2:13; 6) Philippians 3:24; 7) Hebrews 6:10; 8) Hebrews 10:35; 9) Hebrews 11:6; 10) James 2:24.

The Protestants, on the other hand, pointed out many doctrinal flaws with the Catholic concept of meritorious justification:

- 1) It confuses reward and merit—if justification is a reward or merited, it is not grace.
- 2) It makes works a condition of eternal life—the only condition is believe.
- 3) It makes sanctification a condition of salvation—sanctification is a hopeful consequence of it.
- 4) It confuses working for salvation and working from salvation.
- 5) It makes false distinctions between works and works of the Law.
- 6) It is very similar to the error of Galatianism, which attempts to add something to faith.
- 7) It confuses the reward of salvation with the rewards for service.
- 8) It loads works into its concept of faith.
- 9) It makes works necessary for re-justification after one commits a mortal sin.
- 10) It makes works a conditional part of progressive justification.

If you didn't know this was a debate in the 1500's between Catholics and Protestants, you would think this is the very debate between Lordship Proponents and Grace Promoters. If you didn't know any better you would think John MacArthur theologically was sitting in on the discussions at the Council of Trent. The real historical question here is whether you are on the side of the Catholics or Protestants?

(15)

Now when it comes to this theological controversy in modern days, the Lordship people have taken it to a whole new level by presenting several puzzling options:

- 1) Some believe we are saved by grace/faith but good works automatically must follow.
- 2) Some believe we are saved by grace/faith but good works inevitably will follow.
- 3) Some believe we are saved by grace/faith and good works naturally should follow.
- 4) Some believe we are saved by grace/faith and good works usually will follow.

**The problem with all of these views is Romans 11:6 that says: “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.” What this clearly says is if you connect good works to grace in any way it is no longer grace.**

Any merging of any works into grace, in any connection to justification, by direct, biblical statement, ruins grace. Any attempt to put works into grace automatically, inevitably and naturally pollutes grace. Works are not in grace at all and this is a key theological point that gets lost in all of this Lordship salvation talk.

Those who understand grace leave works completely out. Grace proponents believe:

- 1) We are saved by grace/faith and good works do not automatically follow.
- 2) We are saved by grace/faith and good works do not necessarily follow.

The works issue is a completely different issue other than saving faith.

John Rice in his refutation of Lordship Salvation writes:

”Being saved, born again, is one thing; learning to live a consecrated Christian life is an entirely different thing. There is not any way you can judge whether people are born again except you take their testimony that they have put their trust in Jesus Christ and depended on Him for salvation. ..Now a Christian should live a consecrated Christian life but that does not automatically follow. People who are saved will find, like Paul, “When I would do good, evil is present with me...so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:21, 25) (*Dr. John R. Rice Refutes Lordship Salvation*, pp. 1-2).