

The Lordship Salvation Controversy

To be saved must we respond to Jesus as both our Savior and Lord?

Arguments that connect justification and sanctification - Jesus as Savior and Lord:

MacArthur, John, *The Gospel according to the Apostles – The Role of Works in the Life of Faith*, 2000 (see especially “Appendix 3 Voices From the Past”)

Horton, Michael, *Christ the Lord – The Reformation and Lordship Salvation*, 1992 See especially chapters 3 (Kim Riddlebarger’s essay “What is Faith”) and 7 (Paul Schaefer’s essay “An American Tale” an historical overview of the Lordship question).

Arguments that divide justification and sanctification - against “Lordship Salvation:”

I find the following works to be wholly unconvincing in the face of the NT evidence and the overwhelming commentary on this subject by Christian scholars for 2000 years.

Hodges, Zane , *Absolutely Free*.

Hodges, Zane, *The Gospel Under Siege*

Hodges, Zane, *The Epistle of James* (For an assessment of Hodges treatment of the book of James see D.A. Carson in *Exegetical Fallacies*, 137)

Ryrie, Charles, *So Great Salvation*

When we speak of being “declared not guilty,” “justified,” etc we must realize that those words speak not only of initial justification (Paul in Romans 3 and 4 and Ephesians 2:8-9) but also of eventual “justification” at the final judgment.

I John 4:15-17 “If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ In this way, love is made complete among us so

that **we will have confidence on the day of judgment**, because in this world we are like him.

Hebrews 9:27 “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

Matthew 12:36 “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

Matthew 25 The judgment where Christ separates the sheep and the goats.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

“At the resurrection, believers, raised in glory, will be publicly recognized and declared not guilty on the day of judgment...”

Revelation 20 The books are opened and those whose names are found in the “lamb’s book of life” are judged acquitted.

The relationship of justification and sanctification (even faith and works):

“Sanctification...is the inevitable result of that vital union with Christ which true faith gives to a Christian. ‘He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.’ (John 15:5). The branch which bears no fruit is not living branch of the vine. The union with Christ which produces no effect on heart and life is mere formal union, which is worthless before God. The faith which has not a sanctifying influence on the character is no better than the faith of the devils. It is a dead faith, because it is alone. It is not the gift of God.” J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 17

“He (Paul in Galatians 5:6) says that what counts with God is the kind of faith that by its nature produces love. But **it is faith that gives us our right standing with God**. The love that comes from it only shows that it is, in fact, real living, justifying faith.” John Piper, August 8, 1999

“James is not seeking to downgrade the importance of ‘faith’ in 2.14-26. On the contrary, faith retains its role as the primary distinguishing feature of the community. But as the prophets of old had denied the efficacy of sacrifice without obedience, so faith without works is dead.” In Blomberg, 155 footnote: Martin, *James*, 80. Donald J. Verseput (“Reworking the Puzzle of Faith and Deeds in James 2:14-26,” *NTS* 43 [1997]: 115)

“We must underscore the point: James is not really contrasting faith and works, as if these were two alternative options in one’s approach to God. He is, rather, contrasting a faith that, because it is inherently defective, produces not works and a faith, that, because it is genuine does result in action.” (Moo, James PNTC, 126)

When did Abraham attain the status of “righteous?”

“Perhaps this is to ask the wrong question of James. It is not the timing, but the fact of God’s declaration of Abraham’s righteousness that James is concerned with. Abraham’s works, especially his offering of Isaac, reveal the character of his faith, a faith that is crediting for righteousness. When that righteousness is conferred is simply not an issue for James here.”

Moo, 139

“This choice of the word “righteousness” recalls Pauline language, where it regularly referred to the imputation of right standing before God through faith in Christ. James, however, is closer to the OT use of righteousness as equivalent to *hesed* or “covenant faithfulness.” Blomberg 169

“But if you ask them, “Does justification as an ongoing and final right standing with God depend on the works of love?” Paul is going to say, “No, if by works you mean deeds done to show that you deserve God’s ongoing blessing (the point of Romans 4:4).” And James is going to say, “Yes, if by works you mean the fruit and evidence of faith like Abraham’s obedience on Mount Moriah.” And Paul is going to say, “I agree with the James, based on his definitions.” And James is going to say, “I agree with Paul, based on his definitions.” “So when Paul renounces “justification by works” he renounces the view that anything we do along with faith is credited to us as righteousness. Only faith obtains the verdict, not guilty, when we become Christians. Works of any kind are not acceptable in the moment of initial justification. But when James affirms “justification by works” he means that works are absolutely necessary in the ongoing life of a Christian to confirm and prove the reality of the faith which justifies. For Paul, “justification by works” (which he rejects) means “gaining right standing with God by the merit of works.” For James, “justification by works” (which he accepts) means “maintaining a right standing with God by faith along with the necessary evidence of faith, namely, the works of love.” To put it yet another way: When Paul teaches in Romans 4:5 that we are justified by faith alone, he means that the only thing that unites us to Christ for

righteousness is dependence on Christ. When James says in James 2:24 that we are not justified by faith alone he means that the faith which justifies does not remain alone. These two positions are not contradictory. Faith alone unites us to Christ for righteousness, and the faith that unites us to Christ for righteousness does not remain alone. It bears the fruit of love. It must do so or it is dead, demon, useless faith and does not justify. The glory of Christ in the gospel is not merely that we are justified when we depend entirely on Christ, but also that depending entirely on Christ is the power that makes us new, loving people. Depending entirely on Christ is how we are justified and how we are sanctified. Paul struck the one note. James struck the other. Both are true and together they bring Christ the glory due his name. (Piper, August 8, 1999)

“This seems to contradict texts like Rom 4:2-4 and Gal 3:6, until we realize that **Paul used Abraham as an example of faith providing initial justification, while James uses this example to refer to final, eschatological justification.** Thus James shows that Abraham was able to prove his faith as real because he was willing to act on it, so that he was brought to salvation at the end. (Blomberg, 166)

“Faith is not repentance, nor obedience, nor does it include them as component parts. This is why Protestants have insisted upon faith alone. And this is why Protestants have been careful in how they have used the classical categories of knowledge, assent and trust. Faith alone justifies, hence sola fide. The faith that saves is a faith that involves the mind, the heart and the will. The whole person turns to Christ through faith. Thus, the type of ‘dead’ faith that James is talking about is not lacking information, nor lacking orthodoxy, nor lacking obedience, but lacking genuine trust in Christ himself. The threefold distinction is supported by the biblical data... Faith links us to Christ. It is through faith that we are united to him. And thereby, we receive his saving benefits by grace through faith. The Reformed, then, have historically linked faith, repentance and obedience together, not calling the latter two elements within saving faith itself, but understanding them as corollaries within the ordo salutis. That is, one who has exercised faith in Christ, and is united to Christ by that faith, will repent and will struggle to obey and yield. But these things are not conditions for, nor component parts of, faith itself. They are ‘effects’ – signs that there has been an exercise of saving faith.” (Kim Riddlebarger in Michael Horton, Chapter 3 of *Christ the Lord*, 103-104)

When we become Christians do merely believe Jesus as Savior or do we embrace Jesus as saving-Lord?

See the following suggested prayers for salvation:

Prayer in Billy Graham's Steps to Peace with God 2008

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer in Navigators' Bridge Illustration 2008

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite you to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as the Lord and Savior of my life. In Your name. Amen.

SoundLiving.org:

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever before dared to admit, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever before dared to hope. I thank you for paying my debt on the cross, taking what I deserved in order to offer me complete forgiveness. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and trust you as my Saving-Lord. Amen.

Now see the call to conversion from those who believe there must be no call to Lordship in the salvation message:

Grace Evangelical Society

Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29). He has removed the sin barrier, which separated us from God. However, we still lack spiritual life, eternal life. To get that life, we must simply believe in Jesus for it. There are no strings attached. Our eternal salvation is "not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph 2:9). Simply believe in Jesus and He guarantees you will never die spiritually. You will go to heaven when you die, and spend eternity in God's kingdom. It really is that simple.

Fellowship Bible Church Colorado Springs (a Grace Evangelical Society church)

You become a Christian by: 1. Realizing that you (along with all people) have sinned and fallen short of God's standards. 2. Personally believing

that Jesus Christ, who was God in human flesh, died for your sins on the cross and rose again.

R.B. Thieme Bible Ministries

“Eternal life is available to you, right now. In the privacy and freedom of your soul, you can tell God the Father that you are believing in Jesus Christ, and that is the moment of eternal life.”

Frank Minirth, formerly of Minirth-Meyer Clinics

“When one becomes a Christian, he consciously believes in Christ. He does not need, nor is he required, to will a commitment to obedience, though he may do so.” **Frank B Minerty**, *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1993—Volume 6:11

What others say on the subject of receiving Jesus as saving-Lord:

Is? it enough to know and understand and assent to the facts of the gospel – even holding the ‘inward conviction’ that these truths apply to me personally – and yet never shun sin or submit to the Lord Jesus?”
(MacArthur, *The Gospel According to the Apostles*, 141)

“So, too, while not claiming to know everything that Christ will require of a believer throughout life, James would most assuredly insist that it counts for nothing to claim to accept a free gift of salvation without transferring one’s allegiance to Jesus as the Ultimate Master of one’s life and possessions. It is precisely those people who *do* make this claim who incur the scorn of devotees of other religions that recognize the need to do good in the world, thereby making it *harder* for such people to discern and accept authentic Christianity!” (Blomberg, James 178)

Dr. Darrell Bock (Dallas Theological Seminary) debate with Dr. Bob Wilkin (Grace Evangelical Society) at Dallas in mid 1990s at
www.faithalone.org/resources

Bock: “Paul does not think of the gospel merely as a ticket of escape from wrath. It is so wonderful because it is entry into a new, freshly enabled life. That life is not a condition of salvation; it is part of the gift that is the gospel....”

To seek forgiveness is to ask for clean relationship with God, which is why baptism pictures the moment of faith. With one comes the other. I can distinguish them, but I cannot divide them. Both are part of the gospel which comes to me by the gift of His grace. To want forgiveness but not relationship with God is not a response to the gospel. This is what I seek and receive by faith: forgiveness and entry into life that lasts into eternity...

I am comfortable with the term "Lord" as a term of saving confession because it appears in contexts where the gospel offer and response is described in the New Testament... The title "Lord" in the gospel is not merely a way to say God. It is a title acknowledging God's authority over the salvation process. In the ancient world, to confess someone as the divine lord was to recognize his authority and rights. "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." To call Him our Lord and to call upon the Lord who delivers says much about the nature of my relationship to Him as I come to Him for life...

Four, I'm also comfortable using the term "repentance" as another way to talk about a faith response. God's word treats it as an adequate summary term for our message, or at least our response to it... Repentance, then, is more than changing your mind about Jesus. For to change your mind about who He is and what He had to do to gain my forgiveness on the cross, is to understand my need and the heinous nature and price of sin in a new way. Thus, the language of turning is also an adequate rendering for what this response of faith entails. (Acts 26:19-20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9)...

So we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in God's unique Son (John 3:16). I trust this Christ, calling upon Him as Lord, because He has authority, which I acknowledge in my calling out to Him, to forgive my sins, bring me into incorporated relationship with Him through His Spirit, and give me eternal life. He died that I might live. My faith response represents a change of direction -- a turning to Him because I now appreciate that sin costs and separates. I trust Him because I understand sin. I trust Him because I need Him. Thank God that He gives those coming to know Him the grace to appreciate this offer and cry out for it in faith. Thank God He seals the deal with His Spirit, providing enablement that I formerly lacked. Don't sell God's grace short. The gospel is rich in its benefits."

Dr. Bob Wilkin in same debate:

“How do we get the gift of eternal life? What is the condition? In terms of the condition, the gospel is by faith alone. Stated simply, Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who simply believe in Him for it. Without any reference ... as you noticed the verses I mentioned ... no reference to turning from sins, no reference to commitment of life, no reference of promising to serve God, no reference to entering into a life-transforming relationship, no reference to persevering in faith and in godly practice ... simply believing in Him. The gospel is that simple: Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who simply believe in Him...

Dr. Bock: “My fundamental argument is that justification and sanctification are distinguishable, but they are not divisible.

Bill Webster “Lordship Salvation – Biblical or Heretical”

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<http://www.christiantruth.com/lordshipsalvation.html>

What will be the result in the life of a person who truly repents and believes? The result will be a totally changed life. The overall bent or direction of the life, from the heart attitudes and motivations to the outward behavior, completely changes. Where the life used to be centered around self and the pursuit of selfish interests, it is now centered around Christ and His interests.

No Christian will live a perfect life, but the desire of the heart—the practice or habit of the new creature in Christ—is to know and do the will of God. The issue is not perfection, but a changed life. If a person’s life has not been fundamentally changed from one of self centeredness to one of living for the will of God, then that person has never come to know Jesus Christ. The evidence of true conversion is a changed life.