



## **Lordship Salvation's Good Intentions Are Not Enough**

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**Synopsis: In trying to solve the problem of less-than-committed believers, Lordship Salvation creates a bigger problem of confusing the gospel and robbing Christians of their assurance.**

I came close to calling this article, "Why I Could *Almost* Believe in Lordship Salvation."

What appeals to me about the Lordship Salvation position is that it may often be motivated by good intentions to solve a very real problem in the church.

Lordship Salvation is concerned with the serious problem of too many worldly Christians. Who can argue with Lordship teachers who claim that many who call themselves Christians are weak and worldly? We all agree that many Christians do not live up to what they profess to believe. We all want to see more consistency between lip service and life service.

Behind Lordship Salvation is the stated intention of trying to produce committed Christians. Again, who could argue against that? Like most pastors, I long for deeper commitment for my people. What a luxury it would be to see the people of my flock always living obediently, hungering for the Word, actively witnessing, and sacrificing all for the cause of Christ.

However, in spite of these good intentions, I am not swayed by the Lordship message. I recently completed several years of intense study on the subject which resulted in my writing a doctoral dissertation that evaluates and responds to the Lordship arguments. I am convinced that we should not question their intentions, only the solution they offer.

The solution they prescribe for the problem is to present a gospel that gets a commitment to serve Christ "up front" before salvation. But preaching commitment of all of one's life creates more problems than it attempts to solve.

One problem with this approach is that it asks of an unregenerate sinner a very "Christian" decision. Not having experienced God's grace, how can we expect an unsaved person to respond in gratitude, submission, surrender, and commitment? We must preach commitment, but only on the basis of the grace that brings salvation. In **Rom 12:1** Paul appeals to *Christians* to surrender their lives on the basis of God's merciful dealings with them in salvation.

Another problem with the commitment gospel is that it detracts from the only proper object of faith, the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross. Instead of looking to Him to fulfill His promises, those who are taught that commitment is needed will likely look to the amount of their commitment for assurance of salvation. They will live in doubt about whether they have committed themselves enough.

Though they have good intentions, Lordship Salvation teachers have oversimplified the problem of worldly Christians. Some who profess to be Christians have never been saved because the true Gospel was never made clear to them and thus they have never believed it. Others who truly are believers nonetheless struggle with tenacious sins and powerful worldly temptations. Still others while truly saved have yet "to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" (**2 Pet 3:18**) through their study of the Scriptures.

The best way to help worldly Christians is to clearly preach and teach the Gospel (not to add tougher requirements) and to lead them into a life of committed discipleship. When people understand and accept God's grace in the Gospel, they not only obtain salvation, but they also gain the motivation and power to live up to their new position (**Titus 2:12; 2 Pet 1:3**).

This is the strategy Paul used with the Galatians. He did not question their salvation or make it more difficult to assume the title *Christian*. He simply clarified the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith (**Gal 2:16-3:26**).

I know a woman who went to her doctor for a health problem. With good intentions, the doctor prescribed some medicine that almost killed her!

Lordship teachers may have good intentions, but that is not enough. They have misdiagnosed the core problem, and therefore they prescribe the wrong medicine. The result can be hazardous to all who are influenced by such malpractice.

God's grace is sufficient both to save people and to bring them to godliness. The Gospel of grace is the only way to make good intentions have good results.