

# The Gospel According to Jesus

What is Authentic Christian Faith?

# Introduction

- The gospel according to Jesus is summarized in Mk 1:15:
- “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the **good news!**”
- A major concern today is the reality of false profession of faith. Too many people believe they can live in unrepentant sin and still have salvation because they made a decision
- Others leave the church all together, after some years of church involvement (i.e., Heb 6)
- Jesus warns of false profession of faith

# True and False Disciples

- <sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ (Matt 7:21-23)

# Key Questions

- What does it mean to follow Jesus?
- “The issue at hand is whether, in addition to belief in the gospel, repentance from sin, obedience to God, and submission to Christ’s lordship are necessary for sinners to be saved” (Demarest 1997, 265)
- What does Jesus mean when he says: <sup>23</sup> “Whoever wants to be my disciple must **deny** themselves and **take up** their cross daily and **follow me**” (Lu 9:23)
- The aorist tense in Greek refers to past action, without indicating whether it is completed, continued, or repeated

# Free Grace Proponents

## Charles Ryrie

- “The message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel; therefore, one of them is a false gospel and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel” (1969, 170).

## Zane Hodges

- “It is an interpretative mistake of the first magnitude to confuse the terms discipleship with the offer of eternal life as a free gift. ‘If any one comes to me and does ... he cannot be My disciple’ clearly expresses a relationship which is fully conditional” (1981, 37).

# Lordship Salvation Proponents

## John MacArthur

- “It is clear that people who come to Christ for salvation must do so in obedience to him, that is, with a willingness to surrender to him as Lord to the point where you are willing to forsake everything” (1988, 132-133).

## John Stott

- “It is as unbiblical as it is unrealistic to divorce the Lordship from the Saviorhood of Jesus Christ. He is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and saving faith is commitment to him who is both Son of God and Savior of all men” (1959, 37).

# What is the Nature of Saving Faith?

- The nature of saving faith is *fiducia* or trust (Jn 3:15, 16; Rom 6:3)
- Faith and obedience juxtaposed (Jn 3:36)
- Believing is an act of obedience (Acts 6:7)
- Paul's doxology: "bring about the obedience of faith" (Rom 16:26)

# What Much Repentance is Needed?

- MacArthur views the confession of Jesus as Lord as a confession to surrender every area of one's life to Jesus. There is no profession of faith apart from repentance and acknowledgement of Christ's lordship
- The rich ruler asked what he could do to be saved (Lu 18:18). Jesus told him to sell everything (v. 22).
- Must people sell everything to be saved? Zacchaeus said he gave half his possessions to the poor (19:8). Jesus said salvation had come to Zacchaeus (v. 9).
- These passages show that Jesus' language is rhetorical hyperboles to establish priorities and to challenge his listeners to be aware of sin.



# What is the Lordship of Christ?

- But how does one know if every area has been surrendered, so he knows he has truly trusted Jesus?
- Darrell Bock argues that commitment to Christ's lordship is not measured in terms of "quantity as in giving over all."
- "Rather than stating salvation as total commitment in such a way that assurance becomes almost impossible, one should define the basic **relationship** a believer has to the Lord."
- In confessing Jesus as Lord (Rom 10:9), and coming to him in faith for salvation means "**dependence**" on his authority to save, to be honored, and to be followed (Bock 1989, 33)

# What is Christian Discipleship?

- Discipleship in Scripture is not presented as a later option subsequent to believing. It is the call of Jesus for believers to follow him
- A person who truly responds to Jesus in faith and is genuinely saved would never abandon him
- MacArthur states discipleship in terms that go beyond the Bible, for he asserts that “disciple” is always a synonym of “believer” (MacArthur 1988, 196). Not all disciples in the Bible were true believers (Jn 6:66), for some eventually departed from Jesus
- Discipleship is a part of a person’s faith response to the gospel. Moreover, following Jesus in discipleship is realized in every day life and after the entry into faith. Discipleship is both a point and a process

# What is Christian Discipleship?

- MacArthur, who quantifies discipleship at the front end of the Christian journey, confuses the fruit for the root
- In sum, discipleship is a part of the salvation from the start, yet it can be viewed as a journey one engages in throughout one's life
- Discipleship is a process and one must allow room for moral failure as part of the journey. There are good and poor disciples. Examples of poor discipleship include John Mark in Acts and Peter's denial of Christ
- Paul even recognizes the presence of carnal believers in the church, though they are not acceptable (1 Cor 3:1-3)

# The Root and Fruit of Salvation

- According to Michael Horton, faith is not conversion, obeying God's commands, repentance, or commitment to live a new life
- True saving faith produces inevitably all these effects (contra Hodges), but is not itself to be confused with its effects (contra MacArthur)
- The central issue is the biblical and evangelical doctrine of *sola fide*
- Our determination to obey God, repentance, and commitment has nothing to do with our justification, which is the **root** of our salvation
- These things are simply necessary (inevitable) **fruits** of justification
- The tendency to condition justification on moral transformation is a departure from the biblical message
- Discipleship is given to and required of all believers, but it is not the good news in which we place our confidence, trust, and hope

# Conclusions

- A “willingness” to follow Jesus does not necessarily mean absolute obedience all at once (e.g., Matt 21:28-32)
- Conversion (*epistrepho*) means to “to turn” or “return” (Jn 21:20; Lu 22:32)
- Conversion—the process of turning to Jesus—means that to the best of one’s knowledge, he or she will forsake all known sins and cling to Jesus as their only hope of salvation
- Conversion is not a mere point of deciding to follow Jesus. It involves a life time of obedience
- Genuine salvation does involve commitment to Christ’s lordship but this is a process, not a one-time, all-or-nothing, proposition

# Conclusion

- Root of salvation: The gospel is the grounds of salvation received by grace through faith
- True faith should be evidenced by repentance and good works, for faith without works is dead (Jas 2:18-29)
- Fruit of salvation: Good works serves to confirm salvation but it is not the grounds of our assurance, as some have assumed
- Failure to persevere undermines the assurance of salvation, including the inner witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:15-17)
- We must not confuse the basis of the assurance of salvation, which is Christ and his work on the cross, with the fruit of salvation

# Discipleship Pointers

- How would you share the gospel with someone?
- What does receiving Jesus look like in real life?