



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 1:1-18

“John MacArthur and Lordship Salvation”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and for all of the blessings that have come to be ours as a result of what the Scriptures tell us concerning the divine plan of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. We thank Thee for the good news proclaimed to us and through which we have come to the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins. We thank Thee for the many who proclaim the word of God, and we recognize, Lord, all of us who seek to proclaim the gospel that we do not always proclaim it exactly as the apostles have set it forth. We all fail. We all fail to measure up to the magnificence of the message and of the person of whom it concerns. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt give us the motivation, the desire and also the energy to seek to be conformed more and more to that which is set forth in Scriptures as we seek to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the blessings of life that each of us has experienced through him. May we be faithful to him.

We pray Thy blessing upon the ministry of the word through the evangelical churches as a whole and upon the assembly that meets here. We pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon the daily Vacation Bible School of this week. May those who proclaim the word

there faithfully set forth the gospel of Christ. Be with us tonight as we study together In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for tonight in the study that I want to give is “Justification by Grace, Saving Faith, Sanctification, and Lordship Salvation.” Or to put it as we have put it in our bulletin over the last week, it is, “John MacArthur and Lordship Salvation.” I’d like to read a few verses from Acts chapter 16. You know the story of how Paul came to Philippi, how he was the instrumentality in the conversion of Lydia, the seller of purple, from the city of Thyatira. You know also his experiences with the damsel possessed with the spirit of divination and how he cast out that spirit, and unfortunately in casting out the spirit, he offended her masters who had been using her for financial gain and as a result they turned against the apostle, and the result of this ultimately was that the apostle was thrown into the prison at Philippi and there became the instrumentality of the conversion of the Philippian jailor.

The key section is the section that begins in verse 29 when the Philippian jailor calls for lights, comes tremblingly before the apostle and asks the great questions, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved.” And Paul and Silas replied together, according to Scripture, “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

The phases through which the issue of lordship salvation passes may be likened to the three phases of a volcano. This issue just as a volcano often lies dormant for years but then erupts quite frequently in increasing violence, the third stage when the volcano becomes extinct finds no analogy in lordship salvation. The issue is still active still emitting the smoke and fumes of the controversy.

The seeds of the dispute lie in the 19th century with the rise of evangelistic campaigns and the decisional evangelicalism that characterized them. That is the tendency to regard the raising of one’s hand in a public meeting, the signing of a card or the walking of an aisle and similar activities as evidences of salvation. It’s not surprising

that such terms as “Easy Believism, and Cheap Grace” arose. For so many of the supposed conversions did not stand the test of time.

After a period of dormancy, the issue erupted in the late 1950's and early 1960's, evidenced by the debate of two well known evangelicals, Everett F. Harrison and John R. W. Stott. That debate is recorded, incidentally, in *Eternity Magazine* in the September 1959 issue. Harrison was the first Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, and John Stott at the time was the Rector of All Souls Church in London. Harrison took the position that while the acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord is essential to salvation, the demand that one must make Jesus his Lord, as well as his savior, to be truly redeemed is to confuse salvation with the legitimate obligations of the Christian life. Stott, on the other hand, insisted that one must surrender to the lordship of Christ to be saved. Lordship salvation then is the claim that to be saved one must not only believe and acknowledge that Christ is Lord, but also submit to his lordship.

In 1969 Charles Ryrie in his book, *Balancing the Christian Life*, published by Moody Press, made the claim, now widely cited, that one could have Christ as savior without having him as Lord. This rekindled the controversy throughout the 1970's. In my opinion, Dr. Ryrie was misunderstood. What he was trying to say was that a genuine believer might not always be walking in the light, but unfortunately the way that he said it led to a great deal of the controversy and criticism that resulted.

The latest eruption has occurred with the publication of John MacArthur's recent book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, published by Zondervan last year. Like volcanoes characterized by eruptions of increasing magnitude MacArthur's book has produced quite an explosion of comment, discussion, and feisty debate. Sadly, the issue has not claimed the attention of systematic theologians as it should have. Definitions of terms are fundamental in theological analysis. In the present debate they're often wanting, occasionally fuzzy, sometimes inept and even theologically inaccurate. With the present unhappy distaste for systematic theology has come what Westminster Seminary's John

Murray used to call “An ignorance of the status quaestionis,” or “the state of the question” in doctrinal debates.

Let me just say this that when we say the “state of the question” we mean what is the particular theological issue that is at stake in a particular discussion of the theological doctrine. One cannot possibly discuss theological doctrines fruitfully if he does not understand that that is the real issue of the particular doctrine which is usually something that has been discussed, well sometimes, centuries, but at least for a considerable period of time. If we don't understand the state of the question, then the comments that are made usually miss the mark.

The debate over Lordship salvation illustrates the point. A major source of the problem is the problem of definitions, and to some extent this accounts for the fact that persons holding the same theological views debate and disagree with one another. Their standards of reference are not common to them. The lordship debate is a debate over the gospel and specifically the nature of salvation, the nature of saving faith, and the relation of salvation to sanctification. To have a standard of reference that evangelicals as a whole will accept in the main are first clarify the definitions of justification, saving faith, and sanctification by referring to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and then relate the concept of lordship salvation to these definitions.

Now I know you might say, “Well the Westminster Confession of Faith is a confession of faith that is set forth by Calvinistic people,” and that is true. But on these issues, the issue of the nature of salvation, the nature of saving faith, and the relation of salvation to sanctification, the differences between the Arminian approach and the Calvinistic approach are somewhat insignificant, and so I think that most of our Arminian friends, true believers in Christ will find that the definitions in the Westminster Confession of Faith are largely definitions to which they may yield credence also. So, persons from the Wesleyan tradition shouldn't have too many difficulties with these definitions as we come to them.

One final name important to the current debate is Zane C. Hodges, former Professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary. His book, *The Gospel Under Siege*, published in 1981 contains the charge that much evangelical gospel preaching is guilty of compromising the grace of the gospel. Hodges insists that there is no necessary connection between saving faith and works. In fact to insist on good works as the evidence of salvation introduces obedience into the plan of salvation compromising seriously if not fatally the freeness of the gospel offer.

So I want to turn now to justification by faith and Lordship salvation. The Westminster Confession defines justification in this way, these are words cited from the Confession, “Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth not by infusing righteousness into them but by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous not for anything wrought in them or done by them but for Christ’s sake alone not by imputing faith itself the act of believing or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith which faith they have not of themselves it is the gift of God.” That’s chapter 13 section 1 of the Confession.

This grand central principle of the reformation teaches that believers are declared righteous before God by the instrumentality of faith alone. Christ having made a full satisfaction to his Father’s justice in their behalf by his death on the cross. They therefore receive the gift of righteousness and rest upon Christ and his word. The Confession makes the point that while God’s righteousness is bestowed through faith alone and not by works yet when faith is genuine it is ever accompanied with all other saving graces. That is all of the saving graces have their root in faith. Good works then are not the ground of justification but are possible only as its consequences. The Reformation battle cry was, *Sola fides justificat, sed non fides quae est sola*. I know you understand all of that, but in case there is someone in the audience who is not an expert in Latin that

means “Faith alone justifies, but not the faith which is alone.” In other words, true saving faith will always have accompanying it the evidences of justification.

Works, Luther said, are not taken into consideration when the question respects justification, but true faith will no more fail to produce them than the sun can cease to give its light. The Confession recognizes that believers continue to sin, stating, “God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justification and although they can never fall from the state of justification yet they may, by their sins, fall under God’s Fatherly displeasure and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon and renew their faith and repentance.” That’s section 5.

Much of this is important for the debate over lordship salvation. It’s plain that the Confession denies that faith is merely intellectual assent. MacArthur, Ryrie and Hodges all agree on that point, that faith is not merely intellectual assent. The Confession further sees our Lord as a divine being, for he is the author of a full satisfaction to the Father’s justice in behalf of sinners. He thus is properly called Lord. Only a Lord or only a being who possesses deity can save souls by the sacrifice of himself. The Confession states that the justification may fall into sin in carnality. In other words, a complete commitment is not a prerequisite of salvation.

MacArthur occasionally appears to be arguing the position that a full commitment is such a prerequisite. In other places he modifies his position. He said that Jesus, “Never held forth the hope of salvation to anyone who refused to submit to his sovereignty Lordship.” But he has qualified the demand for submission and obedience to a “willingness to obey.” Those are sections taken from pages 134 and 88 in MacArthur’s book. The Confession clearly connects good works with justification as the expected issue of faith. Hodges too says good works are “expected” and “ought” to be found in a believer’s life, contends however that they are not inevitable on the contrary; Paul says

works are the purpose of a fore preparing God. Ephesians 2:10, “Shall a sovereign God’s purposes be uncertain of realization.”

Now we turn to saving faith and lordship salvation. In the Confession the grace of faith as it is called by which the elect are enabled to believe and be saved is the work of the Spirit “by the ministry of the word,” and it is by that word the ordinances and prayer increased and strengthened. That’s chapter 16 section 1 of the Confession. In section 2 the Confession teaches that saving faith rests upon the truth of God’s testimony in the word, that it yields obedience to its commands although in section 3 it is stated that this faith is different in degrees, weak or strong. You know of course from your reading of the Bible that we do have expressions like “little faith,” “much faith” and of course the simple “faith.” That’s a recognition of that. And further that it may often be assailed and weakened. In section 2 an important statement is made about faith’s makeup. “But the principle acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification and eternal life by virtue of the covenant of grace. I think those words are very important for the discussion because the point of the Confession is that the principle acts of saving faith if we may define it a little more in its aspects or parts are accepting, receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification.

What then may be inferred regarding saving faith? Well it’s God’s gracious gift by which we are enabled to rest upon the truth of God’s word and specifically upon Christ and his satisfaction of God’s just claims against us by his atoning death, this belief in or on Christ. The reformed theologians have contended consists of knowledge, the Latin terms are *notitia*, *assensus*, *fiducia* translated as knowledge, assent, and trust. In other words, all saving faith has an element of knowledge. It has an element of assent to the facts that are known, and thirdly there is an element of trust or *fiducia*, in those facts as they are found in holy Scripture.

Now it’s important to note that saving faith while always in essence the same is often different in degrees, as we mentioned a moment ago. I won’t mention the passages

of Scripture that might be deduced in support of that. How does this bear upon lordship salvation and the controversy about it? It appears clear the total commitment of one's life to Christ in all life's details is impossible in our present state. Although saving faith envisions such a change of life that it's bent is forever after toward righteousness. I think that's very important for us to note. That is that it is clear from the Confession, and I think clear from the word of God that a total commitment of one's life to Christ in all life's details in our present state as Christian people, I'm assuming we're Christians now for the sake of this statement, as Christian people but nevertheless not yet glorified that such a total commitment is impossible. However the New Testament makes it very plain that when a person is genuinely converted his life is definitively changed. There is a new bent that characterizes his life.

Speaking of the people of God, John Murray writes, “They are not perfect in holiness, but they have been translated from the realm to sin and death to that of righteousness and life. Sin is their burden and plague. Why? Because it is not their realm. They are not at home with it. It is foreign country to them. They are in the world, but they are not of it.” And of course he could go on to say that they have the sin principle dwelling in their members as long as they are in the flesh until the time of glorification. They, Mr. Murray goes on to say, “Who are of the world are those who live in sin in the realm of sin. They are those to whom holiness is abhorrent even though they may be able to keep up a good front before the church and the world. They do not hunger and thirst after righteousness. They're aspirations are not heavenly. They are not strangers and pilgrims on the earth looking for the city which hath foundations.” That closes the statement from Murray. Murray's words are true to the lives of the great saints of the Bible as the experiences of Abraham, Jacob, Lot, and others indicate. And all of those individuals are individuals said by Scripture to be converted men, believing men. Now if you will look at the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Lot and of course countless others in the Old Testament, including David, you'll see that so far as a total commitment is

concerned, the total commitment did not exist in their lives, but the bent of their lives was different.

The rhetoric on both sides of the debate is not always helpful. Cries that total commitment is necessary to salvation or the citing of the weary aphorism, “If he’s not Lord of all, he’s not Lord at all,” are surely misleading. And those who use such words usually in other contexts modify them. The Confessions statement that there are degrees of faith and that it may be assailed and weakened in one’s life is true to Christian experience. One thinks of Peter, for example, in his ministry as a traveling evangelist recounted in Acts chapter 10. When he was in Joppa for example, and as he was hungry he fell into a trance, remember, probably on the roof of the house. He was able to look out over the Mediterranean and see the ships and their sails and suddenly in his half sleeping half trance, the sail became a sheet let down from heaven and in it were all manner of unclean animals and creeping things, and then he heard the word, after all Cornelius’ visitors were drawing near to the house for him, he heard the word Peter, rise and eat. And you may remember his response is, “Not so, Lord.” That very expression, “Not so, Lord” illustrates the status of an individual. Peter, the apostle, is saying to the Lord in heaven, “Not so,” I’ll not do it Lord, but at the same time calling him Lord.

Now of course you cannot logically call the Lord the Lord and then say you’re not going to do what he says. So the words themselves are a contradiction, but they illustrate the contradiction of the Christian life, namely that we are justified in Christ, declared righteous before God, but we do not yet have the fullness of our redemption.

Zane Hodges never carefully defines the faith that saves in the book to which I made reference and one therefore cannot satisfactorily interact with him on the subject. When faith is left undefined it’s inevitable that one leaves himself open to the charge of Easy Believism. There are professors of faith who do not genuinely believe. The Bible makes that plain also. Authentic faith given by God includes knowledge of the gospel’s great historical facts, and assent to the truthfulness of them, and a trust in Christ to

accomplish them. Is not this the faith that saves? It is the function of the evangelist to be an instrument in this divine work of salvation.

Perhaps this is the place to say a word about repentance. The Confession says, “Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace. The doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel as well as that of faith in Christ,” chapter 17. “In repentance a sinner moved by the sense of the danger and filthiness of his sins, and by the apprehension of God’s mercy in Christ to the penitent so grieves over and hates his sins as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.” That’s section 2. “No one may expect pardon without it,” Confession says. “Although it strongly makes the point that it is “an act of God’s free grace in Christ.” The term repentance is the translation of the Greek now derived from the Greek verb *metanoeo* composed of the preposition *meta* which in construction such as this means “after” basically, and then *noeo* which means “to perceive or think.” So that *metanoeo* has come to mean something like “to have an afterthought,” and since, as a rule, when we have an afterthought is contrary to the thought that we had before that, therefore, the sense of to change the mind has come to be associated with the Greek word.

Repentance then is a changing of the mind, and its uses in the New Testament suggest a change of mind in relation to one’s sin and in relation to God. The change of mind however is not simply that, it is to lead to “fruits worthy of repentance,” stated by John the Baptist in Matthew chapter 3 verse 8 and also by the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 20 and verse 20. It’s clear that the Apostle’s Peter and Paul preached repentance finding it a necessary emphasis in the gospel. It’s the view of most orthodox theologians that repentance is an essential part of saving faith, both repentance and faith being God’s gifts. I hope that in this audience I don’t have to look at the texts of Scripture to support that, but if you’re interested in Acts chapter 5 and verse 31, in Acts chapter 11 and verse 18 repentance is stated to be a gift, and also in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 25. And then

as far as faith, a gift many passages in the New Testament teach that including Ephesians 2:8 and 9.

It's an interesting fact that John the Baptist presented by the evangelist Matthew is preaching repentance. It is said by the Apostle John to have come bearing witness “that all might believe through him.” In other words, John the Baptist preached repentance. John the Apostle says, “John preached that men might believe.” So the apostle did not see any contradiction between the preaching of repentance and the preaching of faith. There is no contradiction between the two. Perhaps repentance underlines the negative aspects of a proper response to the gospel. That is it's turned toward our sin and toward our disobedience with reference to God, while faith more easily stresses the positive commitment or resting in what Christ has done.

Now sanctification and lordship salvation, concentrating upon the major facet of sanctification, its progressive character, the Confession makes the point that under the influence of the word and the spirit through the virtue of the redemptive work of Christ and the new created life of regeneration, believers begin to grow in holiness. The dominion, that word is important; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed. Paul never says that our sinful nature is destroyed and the sin principle is therefore absent from us. He talks about the rule of sin in our lives, the dominion of sin being broken. So the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, or better annulled, or rendered powerless, a better rendering of the Greek word there.

The graces of the new man are more and more quickened and strengthened to the practice of true holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, chapter 15, section 1. This sanctification is imperfect in this life. There still abide remnants of corruption in every part of the whole man. A continual and irreconcilable war with the flesh lusting against the spirit abides throughout this life. Therefore one can see how questionable it is to tell men that they must have a total commitment to Christ to be saved. It's evident such is impossible, biblically. Further while the remaining corruption for a time may

much prevail, by the strength supplied from the sanctifying spirit of Christ the regenerate life grows in grace perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Sanctification as defined in the Confession does not include complete deliverance in this life, for the struggle in our members is always present. Perfection in holiness comes only at death. The believer by union with his covenantal representative in death and resurrection has made a definitive break with sin and has become obligated to a life of holiness and good works. In the purpose of God justification has as its immediate goal deliverance from the dominion of sin and growth in holiness. We may therefore expect such things in view of the sovereign power of God in accomplishing his purposes. The test of God's purposes and desires is his accomplishments.

It's at this point that the issue of the basis of Christian ethics emerges. The redemptive work of Christ provides the supernatural power of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God and the stimulus that strengthens the failing human will to perform works pleasing to God. The connection between justification and sanctification that of ground and issue is crucial. Good works in biblical thought are those works that proceed from evangelical faith and are done for the grace of God. The unregenerate may do works of beneficence that in the eyes of the world merit the term good, but they fall short of the divine approval. One can see then how important it is to insist upon the redemption of Jesus Christ as the necessary ground of ethical behavior acceptable to God and to expect such behavior as the evidence of faith.

Occasionally in discussing matters like this with some individuals who hold some of the extreme views on the left, I don't know whether I'm using the term right, the term rightly in a dispute like this, but occasionally if you insist that justification must issue in some evidence of new life and therefore there must be some work that issues from justification individuals will say, I think rather cutely hoping to upset you, “How many works?” and that is supposed to make you very embarrassed over the fact that you have said there should be some works because you cannot say how many.

I had a young man say to me after I had given a lecture that had to do with something like this at one place, and he came up; he was very confident, but he was not as well instructed in systematic theology as you should be. And so he said, “Dr. Johnson you said that there should be some evidence of good works, but how many good works? How much is enough?” And I said, “One work.” And he looked very puzzled. One work because the Scriptures make it very plain that no man can do one work who has not been first of all wrought upon by the Spirit of God, given new life and the grace of faith and the gift of justification, and if there is one work produced that’s sufficient to indicate that the individual is embarked on a new kind of life. One work, only God can perform good works. That is, works that are done for the glory of God and out of faith. That’s what a good work is. Well I stopped him that time; he may have another answer or question later on.

While on the one hand one gets the impression that MacArthur overdoes the absolute commitment, the complete change to use his terms, the “willing to forsake everything” from which does the willing come one might ask? On the other hand, Professor Hodges seems bent on discovering how sparse the faith that justifies can be. It doesn't have to have any works accompanying it. These over emphases to my mind are not helpful.

Let me hasten to say because I'm doing this for publication and it is to be published in *Christianity Today*, therefore I cannot say everything I would like to say. Let me say this, there is no question but that John MacArthur is one of the finest the expositors of the word today. I greatly appreciate Mr. MacArthur, and I greatly appreciate also Zane Hodges, student of mine at one time, a colleague later on. In fact I had a great deal to do with him coming on the faculty of the seminary for he came on as a member of my department at the time. We're not talking about a debate between non-Christians and Christians, but a debate among believing men, and faithful men. So, I'd like for that to be understood. We're just talking about debating the word of God.

Now I want to come to the conclusion, but it's a little long, so don't think you're going to get out in three minutes. [Laughter] Let me conclude with some observations that follow from the definitions and terms discussed above and bare on the claims of lordship salvation, the view that one cannot receive Christ simply as savior, but must also give him total control of one's life. And if this is not done, one is not saved. First of all, it is true that one must confess the Lordship of Christ to be saved. Only a sovereign God can save sinners, and the calling upon the Lord for mercy is an implicit recognition of his Lordship and of his right of control over us.

Second, such confession must be genuine, not mere profession without reality, and John MacArthur handles that point very ably. Third, the preeminent term by which salvation is received is faith or belief. I regard, as I had mentioned, repentance as a necessary part of faith. Understood properly, this is not easy believism. In fact such faith can only be given by God. It was Jesus himself who said to Jairis, “Only believe and she shall be made well.” The Gospel of John was written, remember, for the purpose of inducing faith. He said he selected those signs and he has set them forth that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that in believing they might have life through his name. So it was written to induce faith. And its demand is for faith alone. And you may remember that in that particular gospel there is no mention of the term repentance. In fact in the Epistle to the Romans, an epistle in which Paul expounds his gospel more fully than anywhere else, I think as all students of Paul's teaching agree, even there repentance is almost totally lacking from the Epistle to the Romans. So when we say that the preeminent term by which salvation is received is that of faith or belief I think we're being generally harmonious with the New Testament, but we do not deny the proper place of repentance as a term.

Fourth, as we have seen from the Confession, the realization of Christ's Lordship in growing obedience insufficient to his will, is the work of sanctification not justification. The two great teachings must not be confounded, or the peril of mixing things that differ

threatens us. Fifth, as is clear from the Confession's words regarding saving faith and sanctification, Christians may for a time live in carnality, but only for a time since divine discipline, which may become severe enough to necessitate physical death is applied by God. Passages like 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 5 and chapter 11, verse 29 and verse 30 make that point. The term the Carnal Christian therefore is not a category of a Christian acceptable to God, nor does it represent a permanent status in the Christian life. In other words, when we say a person is a Carnal Christian, we are saying that's not acceptable to God and second, the New Testament says that's not a permanent status. That's a status in which an individual is subject to Fatherly discipline, and Fatherly discipline may mean ultimately physical death. It's really a terrible thing to the Carnal Christian. And therefore ones status is a conditional status.

Sixth, to insist upon a complete submission to God's will as necessary for salvation is unsupported by not only the Gospel of John, but also the Book of Acts. Professor Everett F. Harrison has claimed a faithful reading of the entire Book of Acts fails to reveal a single passage where people are pressed to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their personal Lord. He seems to mean here personal Lord in the sense of complete submission to his will in order to be saved. The insistence is contrary to the experience of many well known Christians who relate more easily with the progressive sanctification experience set out in the Confession

And seventh, it is sounder and simpler to keep to Paul's invitation as delivered to the Philippian jailor, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household, Acts 16:31. That's the New American Standard Bible rendering of it. If we keep in mind that the Lord Jesus is the one who has offered himself as a propitiatory substitutionary sacrifice for sinners, and if we remember that saving faith comprehends knowledge, assent and trust, and if we see that the new life and standing given in justification must issue in a new submission to God's will, then we shall have our gospel thinking in order.

It was inevitable that the volcano should erupt again and the smoke of controversy arise. It's discouraging to preach the gospel and see so little convincingly genuine and long lasting fruit. I think that subjectively that's one of the reasons that this controversy arises from time to time. There are many faithful men preaching the word of God, but they find that the response is not very great to their preaching. They feel that they are preaching the gospel. But the responses are meager. So it's natural for him perhaps to think, “Am I really preaching the gospel correctly? Is the gospel I am proclaiming precisely what the apostle's proclaimed and what God would have me proclaim? Perhaps I'm not emphasizing submission sufficiently.” And so on, and out of this arises the tendency to move away from the words of Scripture. So the discouragement is often the reason for the desire to look around and see if perhaps we're not doing it correctly. After all the glory of the gospel of the grace of God, its greatness and a limited response do not seem compatible. If it's the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and we see the glory of God in the face of Christ, then have a couple of people respond to the gospel, there seems to be something wrong.

So, how much better is it if we have vast numbers crowding forward and signing pieces of paper, or raising their hands or coming down front in a meeting and being enrolled? Does that not make us feel that we are really being much more successful? But the solution is not found in introducing shallow professions that do not last by the questionable methods of decisional evangelism or by introducing sterner demands that have problematical biblical support. Let us remember that our sovereignty God alone saves souls, and he can be trusted with that work. Let us do our part of preaching his saving word. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to exhort his students, in those days they were all men that accounts for these words and he would say to us in the context of preaching the gospel, “Men preach an accurate gospel.” He was very much concerned about that. That's still good counsel. Then the results may be left safely with the Lord. I repeat again I'm very grateful for Dr. MacArthur's work. He's been blessed of God. His

book has many good things in it. I've read it carefully, underlined points in it. One thing that I didn't emphasize, but is in my paper is that when Mr. MacArthur makes these demands for total commitment, he does that on one page, but then later on he will say, “Now I'm not trying to suggest that the commitment must be total. I'm not trying to say that one must have a sinless kind of existence.” So what I find in his work is a bit of inconsistency probably brought about by the fact that he's a preacher, and we preachers tend on certain occasions to let our rhetoric get ahead of the text, and after all he as well as I and others would like to see significant results in the preaching of the gospel.

Now, we have a few minutes and if you would like to ask a question or so. I would be glad to try to answer them, but you will have to speak out loud enough, and I won't blame it on the auditorium. It's not that. It's my hearing. So, if you'll stand up and speak distinctly and clearly and loudly maybe I can answer your question or at least try to.

[Question from the audience] [Laughter]

[Johnson] I guess that's a harder question to answer than how many good works. [Laughter] No I don't because obviously it's the Father who is the disciplinarian, and the status of his discipline is his sovereign right. For example, the discipline of Ananias and Sapphira did not last too long because they were evidently other lessons that were not simply for the two, but for the church as a whole. It was in effect a disciplinary act that speaks to us today as well as to Ananias and Sapphira. The discipline with other individuals in the Bible is a lengthy thing. So, I don't think there is any way in which we can lay down any precise time limits for that...yes.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] The passage you have referred to is one I haven't looked at in a good while, but that passage is a debated passage as you probably, you may know. I would tend to think that those terms are terms that do not apply to believing individuals, but I would have to sit down and--I've written a commentary on 2 Timothy, but I haven't looked at it in about ten years. So, I've forgotten what I said to tell you the truth.

[Laughter]

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well as I say, I would have to take a look at the text. I'm sorry I can't answer it. I don't want to say something I'll be sorry about later on...yes, sir.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] What kind of approach?

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well, yes I think there is. In fact that is something of what I was speaking about when I mentioned the term decisional evangelism which arose in the 19th century with stress on the outward decision making things that arose with Finney's campaigns and later on are found even in--Moody was a fine man and Moody did a work that was very useful and lasting in Great Brittan. But also in Moody's campaigns as well as in others there were decisions that weren't genuine decisions. Time showed that. However, in the case of Moody it is, I think, a well documented fact that Moody's preaching in the 19th century was exceedingly effective in both England and particularly Scotland. In fact in 1925 one of the leading evangelical theologians of Scotland said that

through the campaigns of Dwight L. Moody the Scottish, the church of Scotland, the Scottish Presbyterian Church was left with a whole generation of elders who have served the church well since, but at the same time, that general pattern with the outward stress upon, well you've called it Madison Avenue, it may not be exactly that, but it tends to that type of thing. That's has had something to do with it. Yes. If you have taken part in the Billy Graham campaigns you know, and Billy acknowledges this, he's a man of integrity and we are, of course, thankful for that, but he and others know that those decisions that they make are questionable until sometime afterwards. And then one see's the reality of them. But it's true. That kind of thing has led to what has been called easy believism, cheap grace and charges like that.

I think time is up. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the issues of the word of God and of our Christian experience which cause us to think a little more deeply about the things found in the divine revelation. We thank Thee for our Lord. We thank Thee that he has accomplished a work upon which we can rest for time and for eternity, and we do that. We rest upon what he has done and our sole hope is in Christ and his work. Help us, Lord, to be a true representative of him and help us...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]