



Lordship Requirements

Salvation Requirements According to Lordship Teachers:
What Must a Person Do To Be Saved?

God's sole requirement:

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved
(Acts 16:31)

**Lordship salvation's
many requirements:**

Follow Christ
Surrender to Christ
Be Willing to Obey
Commit yourself
Turn From Sin
Be Willing to Sacrifice Everything
Give Up All For the Kingdom
Deny Self
Love Christ supremely
Give Up All Your Earthly Possessions if the Lord Should Ask This
Give Yourself Totally to Him
Fulfill the Demands of Discipleship
Etc. Etc. Etc.

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Lordship Salvation Requirements

What do Lordship Salvation advocates actually require of the sinner? What do they say a person must do to be saved? John MacArthur is recognized as a leading proponent of Lordship Salvation. If you search through John MacArthur's three books on Lordship Salvation [*The Gospel According to Jesus* (abbreviated GATJ), *Faith Works* (abbreviated FW) and *Hard to Believe* (abbreviated HTB)]¹ you will find numerous statements that indicate different salvation requirements. Consider the following:

Lordship Salvation Requirements

A person must have “a transforming commitment to the living Christ” (GATJ, p. ix, written by J. I. Packer).

“Follow Him in submissive obedience” (GATJ, p. 21).

Deny self, take up a cross, forsake all and follow Christ (GATJ, p. 30).

Repent, surrender and have an eagerness to obey (GATJ, p. 31).

Obey Christ (GATJ, p. 45).

Yield one's life to the Lordship of Christ (GATJ, p. 67).

Be willing to forsake everything (GATJ, p. 78).

Commit yourself to obedience (GATJ, p. 79)

Make Christ the highest authority in your life (GATJ, pp. 86-87).

Be willing to obey (GATJ, p. 88).

Repent and follow Jesus (GATJ, p. 106).

Turn from sin (GATJ, p. 112).

Forsake oneself for Christ's sake (GATJ, p. 135).

Be willing to sacrifice everything to acquire the kingdom (GATJ, p. 138—parables of hid treasure and pearl).

Give up all for the kingdom (GATJ, p. 138).

¹ The page numbering may vary in different editions. In gathering this data, I used the following: *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Copyright 1988), *Faith Works* (Copyright 1993) and *Hard to Believe* (Copyright 2003).

Totally abandon self-will (GATJ, p. 140).

Exchange all that you are for all that Christ is (GATJ, p. 140).

Make a full exchange of self for the Savior (“absolute surrender”) - (GATJ, p. 141).

Turn from sin, abandon self and intend to obey God (GATJ, p. 161).

Repudiate the old life (GATJ, p. 162).

Turn from evil and intend to serve God (GATJ, p. 163).

Surrender to Christ and choose to obey Him (GATJ, p. 170).

Deny self and follow Christ (GATJ, p. 196).

Love Christ more than your own family members, be unquestionably loyal to Him even above your families (GATJ, pages 200-201).

Obey Christ’s divine authority (GATJ, p. 204).

MacArthur teaches that James 4:7-10 is “perhaps the most comprehensive invitation to salvation in the epistles” (GATJ, p. 218). Based on this statement we must add the following requirements:

Submit yourself to God
Resist the devil.
Draw nigh to God.
Cleanse your hands.
Purify your hearts.
Be afflicted and mourn.
Humble yourselves.

Turn to Christ in full self-surrender (FW, p. 49).

Turn from your sins (FW, p. 74).

Surrender heart, mind and will to Christ (FW, p. 194).

Deny self (HTB, pages 2, 6).

Take up your cross daily (HTB, p. 6)

Follow Christ (HTB, p. 6).

Refuse to associate any longer with the person you are (HTB, p. 7).

The requirement for eternal life is to be willing to give up all your earthly possessions if the Lord should ask this (HTB, p. 9).

Be willing to give up as much as it takes (HTB, p. 11).

“If you want to become a Christian, slay yourself! Refuse to associate any long with yourself, reject all the things your self longs and wants and hopes for. Be willing to die for the sake of Christ.” (HTB, pages 11-12)

Totally and absolutely deny self (HTB, pages 14-15).

Be willing to hate your father and mother (HTB, p. 15)

Be willing to dump all your earthly goods (possessions)—Luke 14:33 (HTB, p. 15).

“The complete surrender of all possessions is the essence of salvation” (HTB, p. 16).

Give yourself totally to Him which involves self-denial, cross bearing and following Him in obedience (HTB, p. 67).

Deny yourself and give Him your life (HTB, p. 69).

Die to yourself (HTB, p. 70).

You must obey the Sermon on the Mount (HTB, p. 81).

Leave all your possessions behind (HTB, p. 85).

“Salvation isn’t the result of an intellectual exercise. It comes from a life lived in obedience and service to Christ as revealed in the Scriptures” (HTB, p. 93).

I have learned that this last quotation (page 93 in *Hard to Believe*) was not written by MacArthur, but erroneously made its way into the text by way of an editor. I’ve been told that subsequent editions of the book have corrected this. However, I do not find this quote to be out of harmony with MacArthur’s Lordship position. If self denial, full surrender, loving Christ more than anyone else, forsaking all possessions are all requirements of salvation, then why can’t obedience be added as well?

Affirm your commitment to the lordship of Christ to the point where you are willing to forsake everything (HTB, pages 132-133).

“You can’t receive His salvation if your family means more to you than He does” (HTB, p. 134).

Give up your life and embrace His (HTB, p. 178).

On the back flyleaf of the book HTB, it says, "The hard truth about Christianity is that the cost is high, but the rewards are priceless: abundant and eternal life that comes only from faithfully following Christ (emphasis mine)."

Observations

1. These Lordship salvation requirements all focus upon **what the sinner must do**. When it comes to salvation by grace, the true focus should be upon the finished work of Christ and what He has done. See our study entitled *Do or Done?* Salvation is based on God's mercy, and it is not based on "works of righteousness which we have done" (Titus 3:5). "**But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness**" (Rom. 4:5). See also Ephesians 2:8-9. It is not our sacrifice that saves us, it is the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:18). MacArthur says, "We contribute nothing to our salvation" (HTB, p. 188), but if you read the list of requirements above, it seems that man does contribute a great deal.
2. As you consider this list of Lordship requirements, it is obvious that MacArthur and others like him believe that the terms of discipleship are the same as requirements for salvation. To them "What must I do to be saved?" and "What must I do to be a disciple?" are identical questions. See our paper, *A Contrast and Comparison Between Discipleship and Salvation*. The only requirement for salvation is faith in the Person, Work and Word of God's only Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The requirements for discipleship are many and are essential for the believer's sanctification. Lordship Sanctification is Biblical; Lordship Salvation is not.
3. One example of a discipleship requirement is loving Christ more than your own family members, and being unquestionably loyal to Him even above your own loved ones (GATJ, pages 200-201, HTB, p. 134). In other words, Christ should be the supreme object of my love. I should love Him more than family members, more than my own possessions, even more than my own life. This discipleship requirement is merely a re-statement of the greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). Thus, Lordship salvation men are essentially telling us that the greatest commandment is a requirement for salvation, and since the greatest commandment sums up the 10 Commandments (Matt. 22:40), then this means that salvation is obtained by keeping the Law. And yet we know that none of us have kept the law perfectly, and none of us have loved God supremely. The greatest commandment (along with the other laws which it summarizes) condemns every one of us to hell! If loving God supremely is a salvation requirement, then all of us are doomed! We have all failed to do this. How thankful I am that Christ Jesus came into the world to save guilty lawbreakers! See 1 Timothy 1:15.
4. Lordship men actually soften the requirements of discipleship, something which our Lord never did. In many of MacArthur's requirements we read phrases like this: be willing to forsake everything, have an eagerness to obey, be willing to sacrifice everything, be willing to hate your father and mother, etc. But the Lord said, "If you hate not father and mother....you cannot be my disciple." He didn't merely speak of a willingness to do it, but He spoke of actually doing it. "Whosoever he is of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). The Lord did not just speak of a willingness to forsake all possessions, but He spoke of actually doing it. So MacArthur is actually softening the requirements of discipleship. Believers do not measure up to the full demands of discipleship (even the Lord's original twelve disciples lacked faith and full commitment on numerous occasions). The good news is that every believer completely measures up to the full demands of God's righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). God has fully provided the righteousness which we could never attain to on our own.

5. On page 9 (HTB) MacArthur states that the requirement for eternal life is to be willing to give up all your earthly possessions if the Lord should ask this. This means that the requirement for eternal life varies for different individuals. For some individuals, the requirement for eternal life would include being willing to give up all earthly possessions if the Lord should ask this. But if the Lord has not required this of other individuals, then they are exempt from this salvation requirement. According to this teaching, the requirement for eternal life varies depending upon what the Lord has asked each person to do. If this teaching is correct, then we would conclude that there is not just one plan of salvation but there is a unique and special plan of salvation specially designed for each individual. This would make personal evangelism very challenging because we would never be sure just which plan of salvation is required for the person we are witnessing to.

6. Fulfilling all the Lordship requirements is complicated indeed. According to MacArthur, salvation is not easy (GATJ, p. 182) and it is very *Hard to Believe* (the title of his book). How would a person under Lordship teaching ever gain assurance of salvation? Could he be sure that he has loved the Lord supremely? Has he given up all his possessions if the Lord has required him to do so, and how does he really know whether the Lord wants him to do this? Has he measured up to all the demands of discipleship? Is his level of commitment sufficient to satisfy the Lord? Has he surrendered enough? Is he sure that he has surrendered all or are there some things he is holding back? Are there areas of his life where he has not denied self? Has he “turned from sin” in every area of his life or is he still harboring some sin somewhere? If he were to examine his life based on all the requirements listed in this paper, how would he measure up? Would this self-examination lead him to full assurance of salvation? Remember, the more we look at SELF the more discouraged we will be. How wonderful it is to rest on the all-sufficient, finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. May our only boast be in the crucified One (1 Cor. 1:29-31)! “Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling!”

“And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

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