



## **Lordship Salvation: A Horse With Wheels**

Dr. Charlie Bing

Published: Grace in Focus

May 1992

---

**Synopsis: This controversial view of the gospel confuses the condition of eternal salvation with the consequences of salvation. We must keep the requirement of belief distinct from the result of obedience.**

In a discussion I had with a seminary professor, the Lordship Salvation debate was characterized as follows: "Lordship Salvation puts the cart [works] before the horse [salvation through faith], but you in the Free Grace movement detach the cart from the horse."

Does Free Grace detach works from salvation and faith as Lordship Salvation accuses? Another way of stating this charge is that Free Grace detaches sanctification (in its progressive aspect) from justification by faith. The question is, is this a legitimate charge, or a floppy straw man?

I think this professor's metaphor is misguided and reflects a misunderstanding of *both* positions.

It misunderstands the Lordship position in that they do not teach works before salvation ("the cart before the horse"), at least not explicitly. Every Lordship teacher I have encountered vehemently denies the heresy of salvation by works. Of course, we argue that they are inconsistent when they attach the conditions of submission and obedience to faith. Still, they deny works before salvation.

The professor's metaphor also misunderstands the Free Grace position by suggesting that we detach the cart from the horse. Our position holds that works follow salvation through faith (**Titus 2:11-12**). This conclusion is based on the inference of Scripture, the nature of regeneration, the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the life-changing power of understanding grace.

However, we contend that works are not always visible or measurable in a believer's life. It is also possible for believers to persist in sins. More importantly, we insist that progressive sanctification should not be confused with justification. Submission and obedience after salvation involve much more than the simple submission and obedience to the command to believe before salvation. When Lordship teachers fail to make this distinction, they mix merit with grace or works with faith. In effect, they put the cart's wheels on the horse--which makes a freakish and dysfunctional beast!

We maintain that there *is* an essential relationship between sanctification and justification, but that there is also a vital *distinction* between the two. Justification is God's declaration of our righteousness through Christ when we believe. Sanctification is God's work of progressively changing us as we continue to cooperate with Him. Justification is the starting point of sanctification (**Rom 6:15-23**), but not necessarily a guarantee that sanctification's results will be seen to the satisfaction of those who desire to measure them.

It is not uncommon for believers in Jesus Christ to give abundant evidence of their faith through their good works. But, how can works be accurately measured? Who can determine the crossover point from non-Christian to Christian? Faith in God's provision and promise is the only objective criterion by which salvation can be determined.

My professor friend was mistaken in his metaphor. He had built two straw men that were easy for him to knock down.

What he should have seen is that Lordship Salvation tries to put wheels on a horse. The result is that they have neither a horse nor a cart. Remember that horses with wheels have historically meant trouble--just ask the residents of ancient Troy!

Lordship's horse with wheels can destroy the assurance, freedom, and growth of unsuspecting Christians. Like its Trojan counterpart, it is an unwelcome beast within the walls of Grace.