

## Ephesians 2 Article

### the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, (1:15b)

The emphasis here is on true saving belief, with the lordship of Jesus as the object of that belief. Some Christians, perhaps intending to protect the gospel from any taint of works righteousness, underplay Christ's lordship almost to the point of denying it. Others would like to accept the term **Lord** only as a reference to deity, not sovereignty. But such a separation is artificial, because deity implies sovereignty. The One who alone is God rules alone. Yet those who teach that a person must believe in Christ as sovereign Lord in order to be saved are sometimes described derisively as "lordship salvationists." The New Testament, however, does not separate Jesus as Savior from Jesus as Lord. He is both, or He is neither. Paul says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9; cf. Acts 16:31). Jesus becomes Savior when He is accepted as Lord. "For to this end," Paul explains later in Romans, "Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (14:9). Believers say—in fact, only believers can say—"Jesus is Lord" because they possess the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3), who was given to them when they were saved (Rom. 8:9). To receive Jesus as Savior but not as Lord would be to divide His nature in two. When we receive Him, we receive Him wholly as He is.

Granted, no person receives Jesus Christ with a full understanding of all He is or all He requires as Lord of those He saves. Many Christians come to Christ with only the barest idea of His sovereign deity or of what it means to belong to and submit to Him. But they are willing to submit (cf. Matt. 8:19–22; 9:9; 10:37–39; Luke 9:57–62), to give up all they are and have (cf. Matt. 13:44–46; 18:3–4; 19:16–26), and to leave all and follow Him (Matt. 19:27). Once they have come to Him, some Christians lose their first love for Him as Savior and resist obeying Him as Lord. But their lovelessness makes Him no less Savior, and their resistance makes Him no less Lord. Christ is not accepted in parts, first as Savior and later as Lord. Jesus the Savior is Jesus the Lord, and Jesus the Lord is Jesus the Savior. He does not exist in parts or relate to believers in parts. Awareness, appreciation, and obedience to Him as Savior and Lord change. When we are faithful to Him those things increase, and when we are unfaithful they diminish. But the *fact* of Jesus' lordship begins the same moment He becomes Savior, and neither His lordship nor His saviorhood changes for believers from that time through all eternity. All the commands of Christ, which are to be taught to all believers (Matt. 28:19–20), assume His sovereign right to give orders and to be obeyed. That is precisely why Paul calls salvation "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5).<sup>1</sup>

This is a good theological balance between trusting in God and intercessory prayer. The proclamation of the gospel and the development of churches was God's will. Yet Paul sensed a need to continue to pray for them. Somehow believers' prayer unleashes the power of God in fresh, new ways. The sovereign God has chosen to limit Himself to the prayers of His people (cf. James 4:2)! Intercessory prayer is a mystery of God's power linked to believer's volitional requests.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1986). *Ephesians*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (38–39). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>2</sup> Utley, R. J. (1997). *Vol. Volume 8: Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians)*. Study Guide Commentary Series (79). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.