

## Salvation Without Repentance?

Recently I have noticed a number of people saying that you don't have to repent in order to be saved. They claim that being sorry for your sins and asking God to forgive you is simply not necessary; as long as you believe in Jesus you will be fine. Jesus doesn't ask you to be sorry for anything; all He wants is for you to believe.

However, is that actually the case? Does the Bible really say that you can be saved without ever repenting of your sins? Let's take a look and find out.

First of all, the Bible definitely says that we must *believe* in order to be saved. For example:

**John 3:16:** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

**Acts 16:31:** "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

**Romans 10:9:** "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

That looks pretty straightforward, doesn't it? All of these verses say that if we believe in Jesus we will be saved. However, these aren't the only verses in the Bible that talk about salvation. In Matthew 4 we find the first message that Jesus ever preached. If you will notice, Christ preached a message of *repentance*:

**Matthew 4:17:** "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus repeated this message on numerous occasions. For example:

**Matthew 9:13:** "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinner to repentance."

Why did Jesus come? To call "sinners to repentance."

**Matthew 11:20:** "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:"

Why were the cities condemned? "Because they repented not."

**Mark 1:14:** "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,  
15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

What did Jesus command people to do? Not just to believe, but to *repent* and believe.

**Luke 3:8:** "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say

within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”

What did Jesus want to see from people? “Fruits worthy of repentance.”

**Luke 13:3:** “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Notice the clarity of this verse! I don't see how it could be any more clear. Jesus said that if you do not repent *you will perish*. Repentance is not optional.

**Luke 15:10:** “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

What causes joy in Heaven? “One sinner that repenteth.”

**Luke 24:47:** “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

What did Jesus say should be preached, starting at Jerusalem? “Repentance and remission of sins.” The disciples proclaimed the same message:

**Acts 2:38:** “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

**Acts 3:19:** “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

I could go on, but I think I've made my point. Jesus was *very* clear that if you want to be saved you must believe *and* repent. Repentance is *not optional*. Salvation is impossible without it. There is no salvation that says “Jesus, save me from Hell, but other than that stay out of my life. I'm not sorry about my sins and I'm not going to let you run my life.” That road leads straight to Hell.

It is true that in order to be saved you must believe in Jesus. After all, it is impossible to believe that Jesus will save you if you don't believe in Jesus in the first place! Salvation depends on the existence of Jesus; without Him no one can be saved. You can only be forgiven of your sins if a very real and sinless Jesus died a very real death on a very real cross, and then rose to life again in a real and physical way. Nothing else can save you. You cannot be saved by your good deeds, by your church membership, or by your ancestry. Only the death and resurrection of Jesus can do it.

At the same time, you must also *repent* in order to be saved. God will not save anyone who approaches Him and says “I refuse to be sorry for anything that I've done and I refuse to call You my master. You have no right to control my life.” After all, even *demons* believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died and rose again, but they are not saved! Do you really think that adopting the demonic attitude of “Don't you dare tell me what to do!” is going to lead to salvation?

You see, belief in Jesus leads to repentance. Genuine belief is when you realize that you are a sinner who is bound for judgment and eternal damnation if God does not forgive your sins. It is the moment you realize that your most desperate need in life is God's forgiveness. At that point you will seek forgiveness with all your heart, and God will freely grant forgiveness to those who repent and believe. He turns no one away; He accepts all who come.

Now, I don't want to be misunderstood. Repentance does not mean that we never sin again. People who are saved still have a sin nature inside them that they must fight each and every day until the Lord brings them home. What saves us is not being sinless (for none of us are) but our faith in Jesus. The difference is that we are sorry for our sins and we seek the Lord's grace to fight the sin in our life so that we may please our Heavenly Father. There is a tremendous difference between seeking the Lord's forgiveness and grace, and telling God "I refuse to admit that I'm a sinner and I am not the least bit sorry about breaking Your law." It is the difference between life and death.

You must believe to be saved – but you cannot be saved apart from repentance. Approaching God apart from seeking forgiveness will only lead to Hell.