

Salvation Without Repentance?

There are some people who claim that you don't have to repent in order to be saved. They teach that it's not necessary to be sorry for your sins and ask God to forgive you; as long as you believe in Jesus you'll be fine. However, is that actually the case? Does the Bible really say that you can be saved without ever repenting of your sins?

Before answering this question it's important to define what repentance means. When we repent we're doing several things:

- We acknowledge that we've sinned against God (1 John 1:8-10).
- We're sorry for our sins that we committed against God (Romans 6:20-21).
- We ask God to forgive us for what we've done (1 John 1:9).
- We ask God to change our heart so that we might walk in His ways and no longer sin (Psalm 51:10, 119:32). In other words, from that moment on *we have a desire to stop sinning and live a life that pleases God*. We may still sin, but our heart's desire is to die to our sin and please God by obeying all of His commands.

If a person refuses to admit that he's sinned then he hasn't repented. If a person isn't sorry about his sins then he hasn't repented. If a person loves his sins and intends on continuing to sin then he hasn't repented. If a person rejects God's authority over him and chooses to live in open defiance to His commands, that person hasn't repented.

So is repentance required for salvation, or is it enough to just believe in Jesus? First of all, it's true that the Bible says 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**.”

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. That message was one 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.” In other words, Jesus commanded sinners to repent.

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 1:14-15: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 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! Jesus said that if you don't repent *you will perish*. Repentance isn't 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." Why does Heaven rejoice? Because the sinners who believes and

repents will be saved.

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.” That's exactly the message that the disciples proclaimed:

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.”

Jesus was *very* clear that in order to be saved you must believe *and* repent. Repentance is *not optional!* Salvation is impossible without it. There is no salvation that says “God, please 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's true that to be saved you must believe in Jesus. After all, it's impossible to believe that Jesus will save you if you don't believe in Him 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 on the cross, and then rose to life again in a real and physical way. Nothing else can save you. You can't be saved by your good deeds, your church membership, or 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 won't 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 Lord. You have no right to control my life." After all, even *demons* believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Matthew 8:29), but they aren't saved! Adopting the devil's rebellion against God isn't the path to salvation.

You see, belief in Jesus leads to repentance. Genuine belief is when you realize you're a sinner who is bound for judgment and eternal damnation if God doesn't forgive your sins. It's the moment you realize that your most desperate need in life is God's forgiveness, and then you seek that forgiveness with all your heart. God will freely grant forgiveness to those who repent and believe. He turns no one away (John 6:37); He accepts all who come.

Now, I don't want to be misunderstood. Repentance doesn't mean that we'll never sin again. People who are saved still have a sin nature which must be fought each and every day until the Lord Jesus Christ brings them home. What saves us isn't being sinless (for none of us are) but our faith in Jesus. The difference is that genuine Christians are sorry for their sins and seek the Lord's grace to fight against sin so that we may please our Heavenly Father. There's 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'm not the least bit sorry about breaking Your law." It's the difference between salvation and everlasting torment.

You must believe to be saved – but you can't be saved apart from repentance. Approaching God apart from repentance will only lead to Hell.