

The Essentials

Jesus can save us from our sin; He will not save us in our sin.

We are all sinners in need of God's mercy. We'll enter His promised mercy if we'll obey God by coming to Him in repentance:

- “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30)
- “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

Then we'll have our past sins “blotted out.” We'll have redemption — through Jesus' death and blood — from the death penalty we had earned (Romans 6:23). Jesus died to make His death and blood *available* to cover our sins, past present and future —if we'll come to Him in repentance:

- “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19, NKJV. We'll have “remission of sins that are past” (Romans 3:25); we'll be “purged” of our “old sins” (2 Peter 1:9).
- “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14; Matthew 20:28)

And we'll also receive the gift of the holy spirit:

- “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 2:38)
- “And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” (Acts 5:32)

Through the holy spirit, we enter “the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). Jesus will help us overcome slavery to sin, and will lead us into His righteousness . . . IF we'll abide in Him in repentance:

- “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Jesus, in Revelation 3:19)

A relationship with Him

- “yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).
- “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” (Revelation 21:7)

He is the potter; we are the clay. He cannot work with us if we are not in repentance. Through Him we can overcome slavery to sin, and grow in love for God and neighbor. He will prepare us for the gift of eternal life as the Father’s sons and daughters.

While we abide in Jesus in repentance, following the holy spirit, we remain in **justification** —not under condemnation:

- “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1)

Justification and salvation are different things, at different times:

- “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (the apostle Paul, in Romans 5:9)

“Through Him”: while we abide in Jesus in repentance, following the holy spirit, we remain “in His goodness” or grace (Romans 11:22). And we have “the hope of salvation”—the *promised* gift of eternal life, to be received at Jesus’ “revelation,” His return:

- “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8,9; also Acts 15:11 and Romans 5:9).

- “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25).

- “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;” (1 Peter 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:50–54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17).

While we abide in Jesus in repentance, following the holy spirit, Jesus intercedes for us (Hebrews 7:25). He continues to cover new sins with His blood, which He made available on the cross:

- “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

What happens if we choose to return to a life of unrepentant, willful sin—no longer abiding in Jesus and no longer following the holy spirit?

- “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” (Hebrews 10:26,27)

- “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (Jesus, in John 15:6)

- “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” (Romans 11:22)

Judgment is on “the house of God” right now (1 Peter 4:17).

- “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” (Hebrews 4:1)

“Once saved, always saved”? Of course not; here’s why:

1.) We're not saved yet: Jesus said we must "endure to the end" before we're saved (Matthew 10:22). During this mortal life we have "the hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:8,9). We won't be saved until we receive eternal life at His return. **Then** we'll have eternal security. Short of actually receiving eternal life, we will surely perish —very much unsaved.

2.) In this mortal life we may enter **justification** — and have "the hope of salvation" — but we can fall away from justification and be "cut off." No longer "in His goodness" or grace, we'll forfeit that "hope of salvation." We have many warnings not to fall away, and to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10,11) . . . for good reason!

The apostle Paul had the holy spirit, and understood that even after preaching to others he could possibly return to a life of sin and therefore be rejected, a "castaway":

•"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:27)

"Saved by faith alone"? By just "trusting"? Certainly not. Here's why:

1.) Salvation is by **grace**. Grace is received "**through** faith" (Eph 2:8) —**not just because we have faith**.

What do I mean by "through" faith? Through faith we understand that God exists and rewards . . . and that there is a choice — and a need — to "come to God" (Hebrews 11:6) in repentance, confessing and forsaking sin. If we'll obey and **do that** (rather than continue along in our old life apart from God) we'll enter his promised mercy and grace (Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7) . . . and our past sins will be "blotted out" (Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9; Romans 3:25; 2 Peter 1:9) . . . and we'll receive the gift of the holy spirit (Acts 2:38; Acts 5:32) . . . by which we'll be in "the presence of the Lord" and can begin a new life: "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19)

Without faith, we don't "see" we have a choice — to come to God, or, to walk away — therefore it would be impossible to decide to "come to God":

- “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

“Faith alone” is not enough: we must “come to God” on His terms to please Him (Hebrews 11:6) and enter His promised mercy and grace. Otherwise our faith is dead.

2.) Jesus is “. . . the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9). “Faith alone” is not enough: we must obey. Outside of repentance — confessing and forsaking sin — we receive no mercy and will perish, just as Jesus, Peter and Paul warned (Luke 13:5; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Corinthians 9:27).

3). True *believers* are those who — like Abraham — *act* on their faith and obey God (James 2:20-24; 1 Peter 2:7). Otherwise, they are not believers; their faith is dead. Abraham's “works” was his obedience (nothing to do with works of the law, nothing to do with good works done for others). His obedience (leaving for the promised land (Heb 11:8) and later offering Isaac) made his faith alive and complete; for his obedience he was justified and deemed to be a believer —“and not by faith only” (James 2:24).

So we see that *believing* goes beyond “faith only.”

Jesus warned “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5). So we have confirmation that “believeth” (re John 3:16, e.g.) must go *beyond* “faith alone”:

- “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.” (John 3:16)

4.) Jesus did not tell His disciples to preach “faith alone.” He told them to preach “repentance and remission of sins”:

- “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is

written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:45-47)

—George Burdick, April 16, 2021