

The Gospel in Four Minutes?

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“. . . And anyone and everyone, and by everyone I mean everyone who puts their faith and trust in Him and Him alone, can stand in full confidence of God’s forgiveness. And here’s what the promise is, that you are guaranteed full access to return perfect unity, by simply believing in Christ and Christ alone. You are receiving life . . . yes, life. And this is the gospel.”

Dynamic? √ Engaging? √ Accurate? ? This is important stuff. Let’s make sure. He says:

“Everyone who puts their faith and trust in Him, and Him alone, can stand in full confidence of God’s forgiveness.”

True? The apostle John says:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)

What we have here is a disconnect. The video says “just trust in Him” to be forgiven. But John says confess your sins to be forgiven. We need more evidence . . . more information on how to get God’s mercy and be forgiven. Is it a matter of just trusting, or are we told to do more? These verses will help:

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”
(Proverbs 28:13)

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him” (Isaiah 55:7)

Confessing and forsaking sin? That sounds like *repentance*: changing our mind about continuing in sin, determined to live in a way that pleases God.

So then, if we’ll come to God in repentance, we’re promised His mercy, and our past sins will be forgiven and erased? Is that what the Bible says? Exactly:

“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).

Outside of repentance we will perish, as Jesus warned:

“. . . except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5)

The apostle Peter wrote that

“. . . the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

We have sound evidence that “just trusting” in Him is not enough: we must come to Him in repentance — confessing and forsaking sin — to be forgiven *and* to avoid perishing. We need to get rid of this “just trust in Him” idea.

Eternity is at stake here . . . we need to get this right. So, what **is** the gospel, and how does being forgiven relate to the gospel?

The gospel is two things:

First, it is the good news that Jesus brought, of the coming Kingdom of God here on earth. Jesus

“. . . went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him” (Luke 8:1)

In God’s Kingdom, Jesus will

“. . . judge among the nations . . . nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4)

Second, the gospel is the good news that we can be **saved**: saved from perishing. We can receive the gift of eternal life:

“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)

The word *believe* is often understood to mean to have trust that something is true. Therefore many conclude that we can avoid perishing, and have eternal life, by just having trust. But just minutes ago we saw that unless we come to repentance — confessing and forsaking sin — we’ll perish, without mercy.

Confusing? Yes. We need to sort this out. When it comes to the important things, like our salvation, we would be well advised to follow the directions given to us by our Savior. Jesus is

“. . . the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9).

So, what are the directions? What are we told to do? Jesus said

“. . . repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17)

John the Baptist preached

“. . . repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3)

Peter preached

“come to repentance” or else “perish” (2 Peter 3:9)

Paul preached

“God . . . now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30)

If we’ll obey — confessing and forsaking sin — we’ll enter His promised **mercy**, as we saw earlier (re: Proverbs 28:13). We’ll be **forgiven** (re: 1 John 1:9). We’ll have “**remission of sins that are past**” (Romans 3:25). We’ll be “**purged**” of our “**old sins**” (2 Peter 1:9). As we saw earlier, our past sins will be “**blotted out**” (re: Acts 3:19):

“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).

How do we enter “the presence of the Lord”? By receiving the holy spirit, which God gives “to them that obey Him” (Acts 5:32) —to those who come to Him in repentance.

“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)

Through the holy spirit Jesus will lead us into the truth, and will help us overcome slavery to sin, and will lead us into love for God and neighbor. He is the potter, we are the clay. Outside of abiding in Him in repentance, He cannot work with us. Jesus says

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

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Revelation 21:7)

When our past sins are blotted out, we also have redemption: the death penalty we had earned for our past sins is covered. Jesus died to make His death, His blood, available to cover the death penalty we earn for sin:

“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)

Thank You, Jesus!

Without the redemption Jesus made available by His sacrifice, we would all be hopelessly doomed to perish as the “wages” of our sin:

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

But now if we’ll come to Him in repentance we’ll no longer hopelessly doomed: Jesus will be our mediator and advocate with the Father, and will present his sacrifice — His death and blood — to cover the death penalty we earn for sin:

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25)

This is how we enter **justification**: in right standing with God. But we are not yet **saved**. Note how Paul separates justification and salvation: they are different things, at different times:

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

Salvation comes in the future, “through Him.” Salvation is only possible if we abide in Jesus, and in repentance follow the holy spirit. As long as we are abiding in Him — present tense — and are following the holy spirit — present tense — 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)

We are human, and will sin even after coming to repentance. But as long as we abide in Jesus, and in repentance follow the holy spirit, He remains our advocate with the Father: He continues — present tense — to cover new sins with His blood:

“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)

Justification is *alive and active*: it is a present-tense living, working relationship with Jesus and the Father . . . not a once-and-done event of the past. Paul wrote “*Being now* justified” (re Romans 5:9) . . . not *having been* justified.

As long as we abide in Jesus, and in repentance follow the holy spirit, we are in spiritual *life*. We are “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, His second coming:

“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)

“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)

At Jesus’ return, the “dead in Christ” will be resurrected from their graves. Then they — along with those “in Christ” which “are alive and remain” — will receive the gift of eternal life. Paul described this in 1 Corinthians 15:42–54, and here in 1 Thessalonians:

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

Upon receiving eternal life we will have been saved: saved from ever perishing in death. We will have eternal security. And we will have a much more meaningful future than

some sort of eternal vacation off in heaven. We will be teaching and ruling with Jesus in the Kingdom of God, right here on earth:

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6)

We have free will, and if we choose to no longer abide in Jesus, and to return to a life of un-repentance and willful sin, then there is no more sacrifice to cover our new sins:

“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)

No longer abiding in Jesus, and no longer following the holy spirit, we would return to condemnation, no longer in justification and no longer “in his goodness” or grace. (Romans 8:1) We’d be “cut off,” and we’d forfeit that “hope of salvation”:

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

“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)

“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)

Faith

Perhaps you’re wondering, “What about faith? How does faith fit in?” Saving grace is received *through* faith . . . not just because we *have* faith:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8)

It is *through* faith — through trust that God exists and rewards — that we see we have a choice to make: to either come to God, or else to just remain in our old life, preferring the attractions and approval of the world. Without faith, we could not *see* that choice, so it would be impossible for us 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 is necessary, but it is not enough. It is the decision to “come to God” on His

terms, in repentance, that pleases Him . . . and for which we enter His promised mercy . . . and for which we have our past sins blotted out . . . and for which we receive redemption from the death penalty we had earned for sin . . . and for which we receive the gift of the holy spirit, by which we enter “the presence of the Lord.” That is how we enter justification and grace, and have the “hope of salvation” — the promised gift of eternal life — which we can only receive “through Him.”

“Faith” and “believe” are different words in the original Greek. “Faith” was a noun, something you have: trust or intellectual acceptance. “Believe” was a verb: committing to and acting on your faith.

The apostle James used Abraham's example to illustrate the difference. True *believers* — like Abraham — are those who *act* on their faith and obey God. Abraham was deemed a believer “not by faith only” (James 2:24), but because he acted on his faith and obeyed. He left for the promised land, and later offered Isaac. His action, his obedience, was his works. Here's James:

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?
Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?
And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (James 2:20–24)

Believing goes beyond “faith only.” Acting on our faith — obeying — brings our faith to life; otherwise, our faith is dead (James 2:26).

Now when we read John 3:16 “believe” comes alive in its full meaning: *believers* act on their faith and obey; they “come to God” on his terms:

“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)

We have seen that outside of repentance — confessing and forsaking sin — we receive no mercy and will perish, as Jesus warned. Therefore “believe” in John 3:16 necessarily goes beyond faith alone: more is *required* than faith alone. We must believe —act on our faith and come to God on His terms, in repentance.

Faith is “the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8), given to us to call us. Similar to Abraham, we also are called to journey, to take the “narrow way” to the promised land: eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Question is, will we follow directions, and answer the call and come to God?