

Receive God's Mercy and Grace

We are all sinners in need of God's mercy. And our sins *remain* - neither forgiven, nor blotted out, nor paid for - *unless* we come to repentance —as we are commanded to do:

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Paul, in Acts 17:30)

If we'll obey, we'll enter His mercy and our past sins will be forgiven and blotted out:

"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)

"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).

"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).

That's right: our past sins remain - *neither forgiven nor blotted out* - unless we come to repentance. And we will perish without mercy: we will pay for those sins ourselves unless we come to repentance. Jesus warned:

"except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Jesus, in Luke 13:5)

Peter makes it clear: come to repentance, or else perish:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Jesus died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Our sins were not blotted out or "paid for, past, present and future" when He died: He made His death, His blood *available* to cover our sins, past present and future. He made it possible for our sins to be covered:

"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)

Without the coverage He made available, we would all be hopelessly doomed to perish —repentant or not. Thank you, Jesus. We can have that mercy, that coverage, that grace, that redemption - as promised - if we'll obey and "come to God" (Hebrews 11:6) on His terms: in repentance, confessing and forsaking sin.

IF we'll come to God in repentance, we will have "remission of sins that are past" (Romans 3:25); we'll be "purged" of our "old sins" (2 Peter 1:9). The past sins that separated us from God (Isaiah 59:1,2) will be blotted out, and we'll be redeemed by Jesus' blood from the death penalty we had earned for those past sins:

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

No longer separated from God, and no longer under condemnation, we enter *justification*, made right with God.

Those who obey and come to God in repentance enter "the presence of the Lord" (re Acts 3:19). How? By the gift of the holy spirit . . . given "to them that obey Him" and "repent":

"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)

"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)

We will still sin, of course, after coming to God in repentance. We're human. Through the holy spirit and His word, the Bible, Jesus helps us to overcome slavery to sin and leads us into his righteousness. This is how we are made ready to receive the gift of eternal life, and to be the Father's sons and daughters forever. An ongoing relationship with Him:

"yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11).

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Jesus, in 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)

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." (Revelation 3:5)

To remain in justification - right with God, and not under condemnation - we must *continue* to abide in Jesus and we must *continue* to follow the lead He provides through the holy spirit:

"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)

To follow the holy spirit we must of course remain in repentance: having a heart and mind willing to change as we are led (Romans 8:13,14).

While we remain in justification and repentance Jesus continues to cover - by His blood - the penalty earned for new sins we commit:

"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)

While we remain in justification and repentance we have the "hope of *salvation*": the promised gift of eternal life, to be received - by grace - 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 Peter in Acts 15:11).

"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)

When we receive eternal life at Jesus' return we will be "born again," having a new, immortal spiritual body as Jesus and Paul described in John 3:6–8, 1 Corinthians 15:42-54 and Philippians 3:20,21. Then we will have salvation: we will have eternal security, saved from ever perishing in death:

"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)

When we enter justification, receiving the holy spirit, we have been spiritually *begotten* of God. If we "endure to the end" (Matthew 10:22) we will be *born* of God or born again, —at Jesus' return. Then we will no longer sin:

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."
(1 John 5:18)

If we revert to a life of willful sin - no longer in repentance, no longer abiding in Jesus and no longer following the holy spirit - then Jesus' blood is not available 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)

If we revert to a life of willful sin - no longer in repentance, no longer abiding in Jesus and no longer following the holy spirit - we fall away from justification. We return to condemnation (re Romans 8:1), no longer in God's "goodness" or grace. What happens then? We forfeit that "hope of salvation":

"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)

Once saved, always saved?

The presumption that anyone is already "saved" - done deal - is hazardous error. Short of receiving the gift of eternal life (at Jesus' return, 1 Corinthians 15:42-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) we will surely perish, very much unsaved! In this mortal life we may enter *justification* with God. While in justification we have that "hope of salvation" mentioned by the apostle Paul.

Note how Paul separates being in justification (now) from salvation (later) "through Him"

—*if* we abide in Him:

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

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

"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)

We *can* fall away from justification. We are warned to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10,11), otherwise we may forfeit our "hope of salvation." We may miss that "appointment . . . to obtain salvation" Paul spoke of in 1 Thessalonians 5:8,9.

"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)

What about faith?

Faith - trust that God exists and rewards - is necessary, because without it we could never see any reason or need to "come to God" on His terms, in repentance:

"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)

It is the decision, to obey and "come to God" on His terms, that pleases God, and for which we receive His promised mercy (Proverbs 28:13). True *believers* - like Abraham - are those who act on their faith and obey God (James 2:20-24). Abraham was deemed a believer - and was justified to God - by his obedience, ". . . and not by faith only" (James 2:24).

We come to God's mercy and saving grace *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)

Faith is given to us to call us. Question is: Will we answer the call and come to God?

"Faith alone" is not enough. We must "come to God" on His terms. For *that* we please Him, and receive His promised mercy. Jesus said there is "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7).

Otherwise - outside of repentance - we do not receive the promised mercy, and will perish.

That's why Jesus told His disciples to preach "repentance and remission of sins" —not "faith alone":

"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)