

What Must I Do to be Saved?

A study of the Biblical conditions of salvation.

Pastor Matt Postiff, Ph.D., Th.M., Fellowship Bible Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan

Introduction

The goal of this article is to help the reader be clear on one question: what is or are the Biblical conditions of Christian salvation, that is, of receiving eternal spiritual life? This question is hotly debated between adherents of Lordship salvation¹ and those who are against Lordship salvation.²

From the outset, let it be clear that it is the position of this author that salvation is received by *faith alone*.³ The terms *faith, belief, or trust*,⁴ when used properly, describe the only condition necessary to receive the blessings of salvation. Doing good works is *not* a Biblical condition of receiving salvation. Instead, good works are an evidence of prior reception of the gift of salvation.⁵ There is nothing that can be added to or taken from the work of Christ to provide salvation. Neither is self-reformation or ceasing from certain or all sins a Biblical condition of salvation. The truth is that a person who is not a Christian does not have the ability to self-reform in a way that pleases God, and no one can claim to be without sin in any case.⁶

But two crucial issues remain. The first crucial issue has to do with the definition of faith. What kind of faith is the faith that saves? Using a grammatical term *adjective*, we could ask this question another way: what *adjectives* can be properly added to faith to describe its type or quality? There is genuine faith, false faith, living faith, and dead faith. But are there other descriptive terms that can be rightly used of faith. I will suggest several below.

The Bible book of James at 2:19 says, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe-- and shudder!”⁷ All involved in the debate over saving faith would agree without any argument that the demons do not have the kind of faith or content of faith that brings eternal spiritual salvation. Therefore, it is clear that there are at least two kinds of faith: a genuine kind of faith that saves, and one or more spurious kinds of faith that do not save.

¹ Such as John MacArthur, Ray Comfort, et al.

² This side of the debate may be called “free grace” but there is no universally accepted name for it, probably because there are quite a few variants.

³ This is in direct contradistinction to other world religions. Mormonism, for instance, teaches in 2 Nephi 25:23 “for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all that we can do.” This is clearly teaching salvation by works. True Christian doctrine, such as that expounded in this essay, eschews such false teaching in the strongest of terms.

⁴ I use the three terms as synonyms.

⁵ Ephesians 2:8-10 is very clear on this.

⁶ 1 John 1:8.

⁷ All Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. Copyright © 2001, 2007, 2011 by Crossway Bibles.

The second crucial issue has to do with the content of faith. The kind of faith that saves believes *in what*? What facts or propositions must be acknowledged as true generally? What facts must be acknowledged as true personally? Is it more than facts that must be believed in order to be saved? Section 3 below will detail what must be believed according to the Biblical definition of faith.

The debate over Lordship salvation touches both crucial issues, as to the kind of faith and the content of faith. The Lordship doctrine teaches that faith is repentant regarding sin and submissive to the Lord Jesus. It also teaches that faith's content must recognize the deity of Jesus and the application of that to oneself, which is the very core of the term *Lordship*.

Much division has occurred over these matters. Charges of heresy have been thrown about wildly. I am writing this document to help clarify my thinking on the matter and help me to present the gospel clearly and completely. I hope it will be a help to the reader as well.

Section 1: The Kind Saving Faith: Repentant Faith

We are faced with competing assertions by theologians. On the one hand, some say that repentance has should not be included in the gospel message,⁸ while others insist that it must be. Then there are those who are unclear on the subject. These three general views of repentance are outlined in the next section, followed by a section that describes several definitions of repentance

Is Repentance Part of the Gospel?

Anti-Repentance View

On one hand, there are those Christian teachers who believe that including repentance in the gospel presentation is a heresy. In the worst case, some of them affirm, "Lordship salvation" proponents who include repentance are actually teaching a works-based salvation.

"You should reject any message that defines repentance as turning from sin."⁹

"Repentance is not ceasing from sinful bad habits, nor even being willing to turn from one's sins..."¹⁰

"To turn your face toward Jesus is to turn your back against sin, whether you're willing to stop committing sins at that particular moment in your life or not."¹¹

"Sugar Land Bible Church does not believe in or teach Lordship Salvation. For example, Position Statement #6 in our church constitution says, '...repentance, as in a person willfully turning from sin, cannot be a condition for salvation.'"¹²

⁸ the anti-Ray Comfort site

⁹ <http://escapetoreality.org/2011/11/28/3-reasons-why-i-dont-preach-on-repentance/>, paragraph #7.

¹⁰ <http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Believer%27s%20Corner/Doctrines/repent.htm>, paragraph #1

¹¹ Ibid., paragraph #6.

The remainder of this paper demonstrates the anti-repentance view falls short of the Biblical teaching.

Pro-Repentance View

On the other hand, many expositors of the Bible insist that repentance must be included as a Biblical condition of salvation, and that it is a heresy to exclude it. For example:

“Q. 87. What is repentance unto life? A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.”¹³

“Godly repentance, the kind that Christ preached, is two sided: it is a turning from sin, and a turning to God. It would be wrong to preach a one-sided repentance that only addressed sin, but it is also wrong to preach a one-sided repentance that does not address sin. What’s more, while repentance is toward God, that’s normally only implied in Scripture, whereas repentance from sin...is frequently expressly or indirectly stated.”¹⁴

Writing of repentance, MacArthur states,

“This is no mere academic change of mind, nor mere regret or remorse. John the Baptist spoke of repentance as a radical turning from sin that inevitably became manifest in the fruit of righteousness.”¹⁵

“True repentance cannot occur apart from such a genuine sorrow over one’s sin...Repentance is at the very heart of and proves one’s salvation: unbelievers repent of their sin initially when they are saved, and then as believers, repent of their sins continually to keep the joy and blessing of their relationship to God.”¹⁶

I generally support this view as the more Biblical approach, although I would be careful to explain that repentance is not primarily about emotion or sorrow. The emotion of sorrow itself is not salvific or atoning; we must ensure that Christian preaching does not give the impression that one must be “sorry enough” for sins to prove a genuine repentance. Repentance is far more objective than subjective; factual than emotional; God-focused than sin- and sorrow-focused.

The Unclear View

Some discussions of repentance explain it as a stand-alone word which means “to change one’s mind” or “turn.” One author published a video and blog entitled, “Repentance Has Nothing to Do with Sin” but then retracted that statement by saying, “The title was an overstatement meant to make a point, but

¹² Andy Woods, <http://www.bibleprophecyblog.com/2011/03/what-is-wrong-with-lordship-salvation.html#>, accessed 6/9/2015.

¹³ Westminster Shorter Catechism, <http://www.opc.org/sc.html>.

¹⁴ <http://www.aomin.org/aoblog/index.php/2009/08/31/repentance-is-from-sin/>

¹⁵ MacArthur Study Bible, NKJV, 1997, p. 1396, fn on Matthew 3:2.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 1774–75.

instead led to misunderstanding.”¹⁷ His point was to define the term repentance by itself, but his readers believed he was defining it theologically with regard to its use in salvation.

The problem with this approach is that it does not go far enough. Stating that “metanoew” means “change of mind” is true as far as it goes, because there are various subjects regarding which one may change his mind. But the question is this: change one’s mind *about what*? And, change one’s mind *from what* and *to what*? The usage of repentance in the context of sin and salvation is far and away the most common way in which the term is used in the Bible, so any Christian definition must delineate that important usage.

Dictionary Definitions

The following are some definitions of the relevant Greek term *metanoēō* found in standard dictionaries.

BDAG, s.v. “μετανοέω”, “1. change one’s mind; 2. Feel remorse, repent, be converted.”

Liddell-Scott Lexicon, s.v. “μετανοέω”, “to change one’s mind or purpose. 2. to repent.”

Louw-Nida Lexicon, s.v. “μετανοέω”, “to change one's way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness - 'to repent, to change one's way, repentance... Though in English a focal component of repent is the sorrow or contrition that a person experiences because of sin, the emphasis in *μετανοέω* and *μετανοία* seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act. Whether the focus is upon attitude or behavior varies somewhat in different contexts. Compare, for example, Lk 3.8, He. 6.1, and Ac 26.20.”

Strong’s concordance, #3340, “1) to change one's mind, i.e. to repent 2) to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins.”

Then the English word ‘repent’ is defined like this:

1. To feel sorry or self-reproachful for what one has done or failed to do...2. To feel such regret or dissatisfaction over some past action, intention, etc. as to change one’s mind about...3. To feel so contrite over one’s sins as to change, or decide to change, one’s ways; be penitent.¹⁸

The definition and usage of *penitent* is similarly interesting.

Sorry or ashamed for having done wrong and willing to atone; repentant.¹⁹

¹⁷ <http://str.typepad.com/weblog/2009/08/biblical-repentance-video.html>, paragraph #1.

¹⁸ Webster’s NewWorld Dictionary, 2nd College Edition, s.v. “repent,” p. 1205.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, s.v. “penitent,” p. 1051.

Various Views of Repentance

Repentance as a synonym of faith

Definition and Example(s)

“The second thing about repentance is that when it is used as a synonym for believe, then yes, it is a condition for salvation...repentance as a synonym for believing is given thirty-five times. Repentance is a synonym for believing and only as a synonym for believing is it a condition for salvation.”²⁰

Critique

This view cannot be true because not only is repentance an entirely different word with a different etymology and dictionary definition, but also because the Scriptures use it alongside faith in a non-synonymous sense. For instance:

Mark 1:15 — **Repent** and **believe** in the gospel.

Acts 20:21 — testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of **repentance** toward God and of **faith** in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 6:1 — Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of **repentance** from dead works and of **faith** toward God.

It seems clear that the Scripture is not using the repent and believe as *synonymous parallels* (as sometimes the case in Hebrew poetry in the Psalms and Proverbs, for instance). In support of this conclusion, both Acts and Hebrews distinguish the terms as to their direction and content.

The synonymous view confuses word definitions with what I will call “theological juxtaposition.” It is true that repentance and faith happen together in initial salvation. They are such that each can be used to describe the other, as in “repentant faith” and “faith-filled repentance.” They are two sides of one coin, inseparable in true salvation, but still admitting of distinctions in definition to describe different aspects of the lone true condition of salvation—that genuine belief which is described as repentant faith. Just because the two concepts often occur together does not mean they are synonyms in their definitions.

Repentance as sufficiently deep sorrow for sin

Definition

Taken from 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, this view emphasizes the emotion of sorrow for sin that is experienced by the penitent sinner. Unless there is a deep mourning over sin, the person is not sorry enough to give sufficient evidence of repentance.

²⁰ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, <http://www.arielm.org/dcs/pdf/mbs111m.pdf>, p. 7.

Examples

“The first false addition to salvation is repentance. Some groups claim that not only does one have to believe on the Messiah...one must also repent. Usually what they mean by repentance is that ‘one must truly be sorry for his sins.’”²¹

Critique

This is one of the most common theological and practical errors regarding repentance. Repentance emphasizes the change of mind. A true change of mind in a matter of such import will inevitably have some emotion attached to it (i.e., remorse), but the emotion is not repentance. It is the change of mind that is.

Repentance as stopping sin and doing righteousness

Definition

Real repentance implies that a person amends his or her ways and does works of righteousness, or “deeds fitting of repentance.”

Example(s)

This view of repentance is thought by non-Lordship advocates as if it were the doctrine of Lordship advocates. You can find articles with titles like “Repentance is not ceasing from one’s sins” and the like on the Internet. The Lordship terminology of “turning from sin” is equated, in the minds of their opponents, to mean “stop sinning and start doing righteousness, and without the doing of righteousness, it is not repentance.”

The Roman Catholic view of repentance as part of the sacrament of penance could fit under this heading in the sense that a feeling of contrition must be followed by the penitent going to confession and then doing some required act. “Essential to the sacrament are acts both by the sinner (examination of conscience, contrition with a determination not to sin again, confession to a priest, and performance of some act to repair the damage caused by sin) and by the priest (determination of the act of reparation to be performed and absolution).”²²

Critique

This view of repentance is equivalent to works salvation. It is flawed for at least two reasons. First, the unbeliever is disqualified from doing good works that merit salvation. Second, the unbeliever cannot do truly good works in the sense of doing them in faith with a heart of obedience and love for God. The Bible is clear that salvation is apart from works (Romans 3:28).

Repentance as changing one’s mind about Christ

Definition and Examples

Ryrie writes, “Indeed, before any of us came to Christ we had some conception of Him. Perhaps it was fuzzy, perhaps it was reasonably clear, perhaps it was wrong. But we turned from whatever conception

²¹ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, <http://www.arielm.org/dcs/pdf/mbs111m.pdf,p.7>

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penance#Roman_Catholicism, accessed June 5, 2015.

we had and turned to Him as our Savior from sin. And that repentance brought eternal salvation.”²³ “Is repentance a condition for receiving eternal life? Yes, if it is repentance or changing one’s mind about Jesus Christ. No, if it means to be sorry for sin or even to resolve to turn from sin, for these things *will not save*.”²⁴

Andy Woods writes, “Biblical repentance is a change of mind about Christ which transpires simultaneously with faith.”²⁵ Woods teaches that this is the Chaferian view, but his analysis is not quite correct, for Chafer’s view is more about a change of confidence.

Critique

Changing one’s mind about Christ is just one of the sins for which a change in mindset is needed. If there is no change of mind about sin, there can be no real salvation, for there would be no need to be saved. Ryrie’s ‘change of idea about Christ’ is not quite complete, for there are some who have *no* idea about Christ. If that were the case, they would have no wrong idea of him to turn from, but the reality is that they have plenty of sins, unbelief one of them, to turn from.

Repentance as changing one’s confidence or trust for salvation

Definition

This view of repentance holds that there is a needed a change of mind about the thing that one holds as providing salvation. In other words, a person formerly had a confidence in works or religious activities or something else for salvation; the change of mind is away from that confidence and toward a confidence that is in Christ alone.

Example(s)

“[A] serious Arminian error respecting this doctrine occurs when repentance is added to faith or believing as a condition of salvation. It is true that repentance can very well be required as a condition of salvation, but then only because the change of mind which ... has been involved when turning from every other confidence to the one needful trust in Christ. Such turning about, of course, cannot be achieved without a change of mind.”²⁶ A similar statement is made by John Mincy: “Justification-repentance” is that act of my will, by God’s grace, to change my mind about the foundation of my

²³ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 96. In his *Basic Theology*, Chariot Victor Books, p. 337, he writes, “And unsaved people can repent unto salvation. This saving repentance has to involve a change of mind about Jesus Christ so that whatever a person thought of Him before, he changes his mind and trusts Him to be his Savior. That is the only kind or content of repentance that saves (Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9). However, saving repentance may be preceded by a repentance concerning sin (which activates an individual’s sense of need for forgiveness) or a repentance toward God (which alerts him to the fact that he has offended a holy God and therefore needs a way to appease Him). This aspect of repentance (like John 16:8-11) is still not saving unless it is accompanied by faith in Christ (Acts 20:21).”

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99. Ryrie adds that repentance is not necessarily a precondition to faith, and that repentance may be understood as a synonym for faith or changing one’s mind about Christ. His main point is that preaching can and must urge repentance, but it must be clear about what the repentance is to be made, and only a change of mind about Christ is needed in initial salvation.

²⁵ <http://www.bibleprophecyblog.com/2010/12/does-repentance-precede-faith.html>

²⁶ Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

standing with God. I turn from every thing I have ever trusted for a proper standing before God and trust 100% by faith in the finished work of Christ for my righteous standing before the Father.”²⁷

Critique

This view is too limited in that it addresses only one particular sin, that of misplaced confidence for salvation. Some sinners would say they have no present hope of salvation, no place where their confidence is placed. In that case, they would not need to change their mind away from a wrong confidence, but from nothing to the proper confidence. The Bible presents repentance as dealing with a wider scope of sin, as I suggest in the next section.

Repentance as part of sanctification

Definition

This repentance is the turning from sin that covenant believers (Old Testament) or Christians (New Testament) are required to do as part of their ongoing sanctification.

Example(s)

Mincy again: “In the New Testament, John the Baptist bursts on the scene preaching repentance, and every one seems to know what he is talking about. The Old Testament has many references to repentance; these provide the backdrop for what I call ‘sanctification-repentance,’ dealing with God’s relationship to His covenant people. These passages help us as Christians to realize our responsibility to keep on repenting of sins that the Holy Spirit points out to us through the Word.”²⁸

Critique

This view seems to be held by a small minority of interpreters. While repentance is an important ongoing part of the believer’s life, it is not sanctification-repentance that John the Baptist or Jesus preached. They were preaching to unbelievers repentance for the remission of sins, including calling the unbelieving Pharisees to repentance (Matthew 3:7-8).

Repentance as changing one’s mind about sin generally

Definition

Biblical repentance is a change of mind regarding the matter of sin generally. True repentance is a change of mind in which a person turns away from sin as a dominating principle in his life and instead turns to God as the dominating principle. The mindset after the change is that instead of allowing sin to reign, God should reign; instead of loving sin, one hates sin and loves God; instead of trusting in self, one trusts in Christ; instead of denying Christ, one receives Him. These are all descriptions of the kind of thought change that one experiences as part of salvation.

²⁷ <http://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2015/08/25/repentance-in-the-presentation-of-the-gospel/>, paragraph 6.

²⁸ <http://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2015/08/25/repentance-in-the-presentation-of-the-gospel/>, paragraph 3.

Example(s)

Repentance is “a change of heart involving turning from sin to embrace Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are distinguishable elements that blend in one composite work by God’s gracious moving in genuine conversion.”²⁹

Critique

This view deals with sin more generally than some of the prior views, and emphasizes that repentance must be included in the presentation of the gospel to unbelievers. I have no negative critique of this view.

Some Kind of Repentance is Clearly Part of the Gospel

There can be no question that some kind of *repentance* is a crucial element of the gospel. Consider the following Bible texts:

ESV Mark 6:12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should **repent**.

NKJ Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** you will all likewise perish.

ESV Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted **repentance** that leads to life."

ESV Acts 17:30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to **repent**,

ESV Acts 20:21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of **repentance** toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

ESV Acts 26:19-20 "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should **repent** and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their **repentance**.

ESV Romans 2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to **repentance**?

ESV 2 Timothy 2:25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them **repentance** leading to a knowledge of the truth,

ESV 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach **repentance**.

If it is doubted that Mark 6:12 can be used in this debate, that is, it refers to the prior dispensation or to the preaching of the kingdom, I could grant that doubt for the sake of argument.³⁰ The remainder of the

²⁹ MacArthur, *Faith Works*, p. 261.

verses should be clear that the preaching of the church age definitely includes repentance in Acts and Romans and 2 Peter.

A decisive text in this regard is Acts 26:19-20. Paul declares that repentance was a basic part of the gospel message which he brought to the Gentiles. Paul passed on God's word which *commanded* people to repent. Prior to Paul's ministry, Peter and his Jewish brothers learned that God was granting repentance to Gentiles for salvation (Acts 10-11, particularly 11:18).

There are some other texts that do not use the same word, but refer to the same idea. These verses use the Greek word "ἐπιστρέφω" which has the idea of "turning" as its simplest gloss. BDAG includes definitions such as to change direction, turn around, to change belief or course of conduct, with focus on the thing to which one turns, to change one's mind or course of action.³¹

ESV Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and **turn**, and I would heal them.' (See also Mark 4:12, John 12:40, and Acts 28:27).

ESV Luke 1:16 And he will **turn** many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

ESV Acts 3:19 **Repent** therefore, and **turn back**, that your sins may be blotted out,

ESV Acts 9:35 And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they **turned** to the Lord.

ESV Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed **turned to the Lord**.

ESV Acts 14:15 "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should **turn from these vain things to a living God**, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

ESV Acts 15:19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who **turn to God**.

ESV Acts 26:20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and **turn to God**, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

ESV 2 Corinthians 3:16 But when one **turns to the Lord**, the veil is removed.

³⁰ I agree with the principle that drives this conclusion, namely the distinction between economies in the outworking of God's purpose, and the distinction between Israel and the church in those economies. But I do not agree with the analysis that entirely divorces Jesus' gospel preaching from the gospel preaching of the present.

³¹ BDAG, s.v. "ἐπιστρέφω"

ESV 1 Thessalonians 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you **turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God.

ESV 1 Peter 2:25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now **returned to the Shepherd** and Overseer of your souls.

The modern preacher is fully authorized by God to preach that people must repent. Repentance is not an optional part of the gospel. In fact, there are no “optional” parts of the gospel. If the ‘gospel’ that someone preaches leaves out the notion of repentance, that ‘gospel’ is not the Biblical gospel.

Someone will inevitably ask about the kind of change that repentance entails. That question is addressed in the next section.

Repentance Concerning Sin is Clearly Part of the Gospel

Furthermore, there can be no question that repentance *about sin* is a crucial part of a Biblical, saving response to the gospel message. For instance:

ESV 1 Kings 8:47 yet if they **turn their heart** in the land to which they have been carried captive, and **repent** and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, '**We have sinned** and have **acted perversely and wickedly**,' See also verse 48, and 2 Chronicles 6:37-38

ESV Psalm 78:34 When he killed them, they sought him; they **repented** and sought God earnestly.

ESV Jeremiah 8:6 I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly; no man **relents of his evil**, saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone **turns to his own course**, like a horse plunging headlong into battle.

ESV Jeremiah 18:8 and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, **turns from its evil**, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.

ESV Matthew 3:2, 8 "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Bear **fruit in keeping with repentance**."

ESV Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have **repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

ESV Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** and believe in the gospel."

ESV Luke 3:3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a **baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**.

ESV Luke 3:8 **Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.** And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

ESV Luke 5:32 I have not come to call the righteous but **sinner to repentance.**"

ESV Luke 15:7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over **one sinner who repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

ESV Luke 17:3-4 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother **sins**, rebuke him, and if he **repents, forgive him**, and if he **sins** against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, '**I repent,**' you must **forgive him.**"

ESV Luke 24:47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

ESV Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "**Repent** and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

ESV Acts 3:19 **Repent** therefore, and **turn back**, that your **sins** may be blotted out,

ESV Acts 5:31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give **repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.**

ESV Acts 8:22 **Repent**, therefore, **of this wickedness of yours**, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.

ESV Hebrews 6:6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to **repentance**, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

ESV Revelation 2:21-22 I gave her time to **repent**, but she refuses to **repent of her sexual immorality**. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they **repent of her works**,

ESV Revelation 9:20-21 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not **repent of the works** of their hands nor **give up worshiping demons and idols** of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they **repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.**

ESV Revelation 16:11 and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not **repent of their deeds.**

In some of the above verses, particularly the Old Testament, it is apparent that the Lord speaks of the change of action that comes after the change of mind. For example, when Jeremiah 26:3 suggests that “every one turn from his evil way” it means that they change their behavior, which is obviously subsequent to a change of mind. A change of behavior without a genuine change of mind amounts to mere ritual and will not last because it is not genuine. True change of mind yields a true change of life. It will be evidenced after salvation, not before.

Finally, we can argue from the contrary to show that repentance must be included in the gospel. Suppose that repentance concerning sin is not necessary to salvation at all. What would be the result? It appears first that we would have a gospel in which a person lost because of sin is told to believe in Christ without a needful reason to do so. If the gospel doesn’t somehow entail a separation from sin or turning from sin and its consequences, why be saved? Second, such a gospel, even if believed, would leave a person in a place where they could say they believe in Jesus but still love their sin. They could argue that it is not necessary to stop loving sin since repentance is not part of the gospel. Such a monstrosity is entirely different than the Biblical gospel.

If a message purporting to be the ‘gospel’ does not include the imperative of turning from sins, then it is not the Biblical gospel.

Responding to Common Objections

The Objection that John is Silent as to Repentance

It is claimed that John’s gospel and epistles are silent on the matter of repentance, and that this silence proves that repentance is not required for salvation. For example:

“You’d think if salvation hinged on our repentance then it would be in the gospels but John says nothing about it. Not one word. Neither does he mention repentance in any of his three letters. I guess John must’ve been a grace preacher.”³²

This view is wrong because elevates the gospel of John to super-canonical status and effectively downplays the other books of the Bible. This view also invalidly argues from silence. Even if John is silent as to the word, or even the concept of repentance, that doesn’t mean he didn’t believe it. He simply emphasized other truths in his writings, knowing that the doctrine of repentance had been dealt with sufficiently elsewhere in the canon. Objecting that John does not use *repent* is akin to saying that the gospel has nothing to do with *grace* because Jesus does not use the word; Matthew and Mark don’t mention grace even once.

A more direct response to this objection is that we *can* see the idea of repentance in the gospel of John. It is implicit in the transformation that John preaches from the old life to the new, coming to God from a previous manner of life in darkness, and the conviction of sin that is a ministry of God’s Spirit. For instance:

³² <http://escapetoreality.org/2011/11/28/3-reasons-why-i-dont-preach-on-repentance/>, paragraph #1. See the quotations from Chafer, Ryrie, and Zane Hodges at <https://www.gty.org/Resources/Print/Articles/A238>.

ESV John 3:21 But whoever does what is true **comes to the light**, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

ESV John 8:11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on **sin no more**."

ESV John 12:25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever **hates his life** in this world will keep it for eternal life.

ESV John 12:46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may **not remain in darkness**.

ESV John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father** except through me.

ESV John 16:8 And when he comes, he will **convict the world concerning sin** and righteousness and judgment.

Undoubtedly the anti-repentance advocate will have an answer for some of these verses. But read plainly, they make clear that a believer is characterized by walking in a new direction and place than previously. From loving sin to conviction of sin, from remaining in darkness to coming to the light, and from loving his life to hating his life, all of this speaks to a fundamental shift of mindset that is called repentance—and all in John's gospel.

The Objection that Repentance is Mentioned Far Less Often than Faith

The objection suggests that since repentance is used far less frequently than faith, we should not emphasize it in our gospel preaching.

Just to take the book of Acts as an example, *repent* or a related word is used 11 times in Acts; *believe* or a related word is used 36 times and *faith* or *faithful* is used 17 times.

So while the basis objection may be true, the conclusion is not. Frequency of mention does not necessarily indicate relative importance in the theology of salvation. The fact that it is mentioned at all means that we must address it in our message to the lost.

See passages Mark 1:15, 6:12 and Luke 24:47 which indicate that no matter the (in)frequency of mention of the idea of repentance, we can indeed say that we Christians do preach a gospel of repentance to our lost neighbors.

The Objection that Repentance is a Work

A second objection to the inclusion of repentance as part of the gospel is that repentance is claimed to be a work and thus Lordship salvation teaches works-based salvation, which amounts to another gospel (Galatians 1:6-9).

In response, first of all, this objection misunderstands the claims of the opposing side. When a Lordship advocate contends that a sinner must repent or turn from his sin, he is *most emphatically not* stating

that the sinner has to clean up his life and eliminate all sin, stop doing all sin, and live perfectly righteously before he can come to Christ as Savior.³³ The point is that repentance is a change of mind, a change of direction in principle. It is *not* perfection.

Second, repentance is distinguished from deeds, so it cannot be the equivalent of a deed or work.

ESV Acts 26:20 ...that they should repent and turn to God, performing **deeds in keeping with their repentance**.

ESV Mat 3:8 Bear **fruit in keeping with repentance**.

ESV Luke 3:8 Bear **fruits in keeping with repentance**.

Finally, just like faith is a gift graciously granted to the believer by God (Philippians 1:29), so also repentance is a gift granted by God:

ESV Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has **granted repentance** that leads to life."

ESV 2 Timothy 2:25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps **grant them repentance** leading to a knowledge of the truth.

Both verses use a variation of the verb "to give" as an indication of the gracious gift from God. A gift is an entirely different sort of thing than a reward for a work (Romans 4:4). It is clear from these two texts that repentance is not the same thing as a work.

Summary: The Kind of Faith Necessary to Salvation is Repentant Faith

So what is repentance? As far as a bare "context-less" definition,³⁴ it means a change of mind. In its most common usage in Scripture, regarding the matter of salvation, the contextual and theological definition of *repentance* is **to change one's mind about sin in principle, turning away from sin, with a corresponding turning toward God**.

In the definition, *sin* means all sin, such as the sin of trusting in something other than Christ for salvation; the sin of not believing in God; the sin of not believing in Christ; the sin of not acknowledging Christ as Lord and Savior; and acts of sin such as lying, immorality, and murder.

In the definition, *in principle* means not reformation of character and behavior, but the grief and hatred of sin. The mind was pointed in one direction prior to repentance, and the change in principle means that the mind is now pointed in another direction. A true change of mind, because it is created and empowered by God's grace, will inevitably lead to the appropriate change in character and behavior, but

³³ John MacArthur, a strong advocate of lordship salvation, is crystal clear about this way back in 1993. He writes in *Faith Works*, p. 24: "God requires of those who are saved no preparatory works or prerequisite self-improvement (Rom. 10:13; 1 Tim. 1:15)." On the same page: "The gospel calls sinners to faith joined in oneness with repentance...Repentance is turning from sin...It is not a work but a divinely bestowed grace (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25)."

³⁴ A definition without a context is actually impossible, but I trust the reader will humor me.

it is the seismic shift of mindset that is the focus of the concept of repentance at the beginning of salvation rather than the resulting deeds that are in keeping with repentance. The change in behavior can only come later, after salvation has worked on the individual to create a new person.

Biblical repentance is a single change of mindset involving faith in God, so that not only is repentance a change of mind away from sin, but it is also a change of mind toward God. The *from* and the *to* aspects of repentance are conjoined. This is what is called *conversion* in Christian theology. It is illustrated by the Thessalonian believers, who “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Repentance as “from” and “to” is conjoined with the idea of belief/trust in God. The two ideas of faith and repentance are so closely intertwined in terms of their effect on a new believer that we can describe the change either as faithful repentance or, more commonly, repentant faith.

A Case Study: Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8:4-24

An interesting case study regarding repentance is found in Acts 8. Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ to the people, and many people believed his message. A man was there who was a practitioner of the occult. He saw that people were departing from following him and instead were following Christ. Simon also believed and was baptized.

So far everything sounds good. However, the text notes in verse 13 that he saw “the miracles and signs which were done.”

The apostles Peter and John were summoned and prayed that the Spirit might be given to the Samaritans because God had not yet seen fit to provide that for them. They had been water baptized, but not yet Spirit baptized. When they prayed, God permitted them to lay hands on the people and they received the Holy Spirit one by one.

The second sign of trouble in Simon’s profession is that he saw the Holy Spirit being given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, and then offered money to them to be able to do the same thing. Peter indicates that this is entirely out of place for anyone to ask, since the gift of God cannot be purchased with money.

Peter knows the situation firsthand, and he evaluates Simon as not having “part nor portion in this matter”; his “heart [was] not right in the sight of God”; he had to repent of this wickedness; he had to pray that God would forgive him; he was “poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.” These descriptions make it almost impossible to conclude that Simon was truly saved. His response could be interpreted positively—I am truly repentant—or, as I think is the case, negatively—I don’t want those consequences! Based on Peter’s analysis, Simon the Sorcerer’s overall spiritual condition is negative. He may be a good example of the first or second soils of our Lord’s parable in Matthew 13:18-21. It does not appear that his mindset was shifted much from what it was before. Perhaps he added the Christian God to his system of thought in a syncretistic way, but was not truly interested in salvation as much as in power to perform miraculous signs and retain power over people.

Such a negative evaluation initially revolts some Christians because, they say, “The text says he *believed!*” That is true, but not all who appear to believe really do entrust their souls to Christ and become his followers. John 2:23-25 and John 6:66 make this sad fact all too clear.

Two other case studies are left for the reader to ponder: King Saul and King Nebuchadnezzar.³⁵

Questions to Ask Someone Who Wrongly Defines Repentance

The question is a great vehicle for helping a person learn things by engaging their own mind on matters of which they may not have previously thought. Here are some questions that might help guide a person who holds an incorrect view of repentance.

Did you repent of your sins in a general way when you were saved? Or, have you done so since that time? Do you continue to do so?

Do you believe that faith follows or precedes regeneration?

Suppose a pastor teaches that regeneration precedes faith. Would you be able to fellowship with him if he said that faith *optionally* follows regeneration?

Do you believe that repentance follows or precedes regeneration? Certainly or optionally?

Would you be comfortable if I described your gospel ministry as one of “preaching repentance” to all people? If not, why is that phrasing OK to use in Mark 6:12 and Luke 24:47?

Would you be comfortable if I summarized your gospel message as calling for repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21)?

Would you be comfortable if I summarized your gospel message as a call for repentance toward God and then, further, as a call to demonstrate that repentance by producing fruit appropriate for it, *without* using the word *faith*, as did Paul in Acts 26:19-20?

In your gospel ministry, do you command people to repent as Paul did in Acts 17:30?

In your gospel ministry, do you command people to repent as Peter did in Acts 2:38 and 3:19?

Where does the Bible teach that repentance is only from one sin such as one’s confidence in salvation or one’s view of Christ?

In your gospel ministry, do you offer forgiveness of all sins that comes along with repentance (Acts 5:31)?

³⁵ I believe that Saul was unsaved, as evidenced by his desire to save face before the people, his habitual murderous desire toward David, and his consulting a witch in his last days (1 Samuel 13-31). Nebuchadnezzar is the opposite. He appears to be truly penitent after his 7 years of insanity (Daniel 4).

If (on your view) repentance has to do with one particular sin, why does Scripture often tie repentance and turning to the plural nouns sins and wickednesses, like in Acts 3:26? And also in Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31?

Is it possible for someone to be saved if they change their mind about the identity of Christ and their confidence for salvation while they retain love for all their other sins?

If a man had no clue who Jesus was and he was not resting his confidence on anything for salvation because he had never heard of salvation before, would he need to repent of anything in his life to properly respond to the gospel?

If you believe in a justification kind of repentance and a different sanctification kind of repentance, where in the Bible do you find that distinction?

If a “willingness to change one’s life” is not part and parcel of the idea of repentance, then is it possible for someone to repent and, at the same time, to be unwilling to change his life of sin?

Section 2: The Content of Saving Faith: Jesus Christ’s Person and Work

The most direct answer to the question posed in the title of this article is, “**believe in the Lord Jesus**, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). In that passage, the content of saving faith is not facts or figures but the person of Jesus Christ. That is, the content of saving faith is not merely this or that fact about Jesus in terms of who He is or what He did, as true and necessary as those facts are to be believed to ensure you have the right Jesus and the right God and the right doctrine of salvation. The content of true saving faith is trust in the person of Jesus Christ—the one who is and who did what the Bible describes. Faith is to be placed neither in faith itself, nor in the recollection of a time of initial belief, nor in the strength of one’s faith, but rather in Jesus Christ.

Belief in Christ Himself

The Biblical evidence for this belief-in-a-person is overwhelming.³⁶ It includes those passages that refer to believing “in the name of His Son Jesus Christ” since the *name* of someone represents all that He is.³⁷ The opposite, unbelief, amounts to rejecting Jesus on the whole—not just facts about Him.³⁸

John 12:37 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe **in him**.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they **know** you the only true God, and **Jesus Christ** whom you have sent.

³⁶ John 12:37, 16:9, 17:3, 20; Acts 19:4, 22:19; Romans 4:24, 10:14; Philippians 1:29; 1 Timothy 1:16; 1 Peter 1:21; 1 John 3:23, 5:10, 12.

³⁷ 1 John 5:13.

³⁸ 1 Peter 2:7.

Act 19:4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to **believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.**"

Belief in Christ's Person and Work

The remainder of this section deals with certain Bible passages that note facts or doctrines about Christ that points to the proper Christ for salvation. These things are necessary to be believed as well. Rejecting them means rejecting the true God and His Son Jesus Christ, and thus the only way of salvation.

John 8:24 records our Lord saying to the Jews, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you **believe that I am he** you will die in your sins."

I understand this to mean that it is required to believe something about Jesus' identity, namely that He is the Lord from Heaven, the Son of Man, that He has come from God,³⁹ that He is the Son of God, the Messiah (Christ), and shares the attributes of deity with His Father.⁴⁰ Such belief is called "believing in Him" (John 8:30-31).

John 20:31 — "But these are written so that you may **believe that Jesus is the Christ**, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

John's purpose is very clear. He wants us to believe that the person of whom he speaks, Jesus, is in fact the Son of God. By so believing, believers will have life through him.

Acts 15:11 — But we **believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus**, just as they will."

This statement of Peter at the Jerusalem Council shows that the apostolic faith included the fact that the grace of Christ was the means by which Christians are saved.

Romans 10:9-10 — "because, if you **confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord** and **believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead**, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

This text makes it clear that a person is required to believe that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead, in order to be saved. Lordship is an issue not just about the deity of Christ as a fact, but about the implications of that fact in real life and relationship to that deity. Submission is an implication of this truth.

Confession with the mouth has caused confusion for some, but if it is remembered that what comes out of the mouth is an overflow of what is in the heart (Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45), then it is evident that a heart belief in Christ as Lord is the source of what is confessed with the mouth. Whether the text is translated "Lord Jesus" or "Jesus as Lord" makes little difference to the point: should one deny that

³⁹ Also John 16:30.

⁴⁰ This comes from the immediately surrounding context of chapter 8 and the entire gospel of John.

Jesus is Lord, he has rejected the only salvation that there is and gives plain evidence that he lacks the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3).

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 — “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you **hold fast to the word I preached to you**--unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that **Christ died for our sins** in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that **he was buried**, that **he was raised** on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

From this portion of Scripture it is clear that to truly believe the good news of the gospel, one must hold fast to two key truths: that Jesus died for our sins, and that he was raised on the third day. I understand the fact of burial to be supportive of the fact that He died; and I take the following eyewitness list as supportive of the fact that He arose. Thus the first and third are the key gospel truths, with the second and fourth subordinate and supportive of those facts. 1 Thessalonians 4:14 affirms the same twin truths of the dead and resurrection of Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For **by grace** you have been **saved through faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast.

Rom 3:28 For we hold that one is justified **by faith apart from works of the law**.

In 1 John 1:9, the Scripture raises the idea of confession as an important aspect of salvation.

1 John 1:9 — If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Many Christians confine this passage to the life of a believer in Christ, and that is indeed the context in which John is writing. However, the disposition to confess sins is a basic component of true, repentant faith. Therefore I include it here as a basic part of the content of salvation.

In the above pair of texts, the Bible makes it clear that salvation is not obtained by works or the works of the law, but rather by grace through faith. Rejecting that truth is tantamount⁴¹ to rejecting the entire gospel out of hand.

Hebrews 11:6 — And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must **believe that he exists** and that he rewards those who seek him.

The inspired text here emphasizes the necessity to believe the truth of the propositions that God exists and that God grants rewards to those who seek him.

We also must consider the concept of the exclusivity of salvation. The Christian gospel presents Jesus Christ as the only answer for man’s sin. There exists no other way of salvation, so what the Christian evangelist is doing is really calling someone to faith in Christ as the only way. It is not appropriate to

⁴¹ *Tantamount* means something like “of the same seriousness” or “basically the same as.”

think that a person can reject the exclusivity of Christ while at the same time savingly believe in him. Here are two key texts to that effect.

Acts 4:12 — And there is salvation in no one else, for **there is no other name** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

John 14:6 — Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**"

Finally, a text like John 3:16 wraps up our discussion because it points to the fact that the Christian message is that whoever believes in Jesus will receive eternal life.

John 3:16 — For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**

Summary

In summary, we find directly from Scripture that an unsaved man must entrust himself to the Jesus who has a specific identity and a specific work while having a repentant mindset about one's self:

- Jesus is Savior
- Jesus is the Messiah
- Jesus is gracious to extend an offer of salvation
- Jesus is Lord
- Jesus died for our sins
- Jesus was raised from the dead
- Jesus is the only hope
- God exists
- Confession of sin
- Those who believe in Christ will be saved

We must be careful *not* to present sidebar issues as essential to salvation. For instance,

- We do not present a distinction between 4-point and 5-point Calvinism as necessary to be believed, or any other number of points of Calvinism or Arminianism.
- We do not present information about the Lordship controversy. At the danger of oversimplification, I say that this is an "in house" debate. Of course we present the correct gospel because it is the only gospel; but we do not engage the unbeliever in the debate to attempt to sway them one way or the other.
- We do not talk about Bible versions. Which version one uses is irrelevant to salvation.
- We do not talk about the debate over creationism. Of course we may respond to a person's question about creation, young earth, evolution, etc., but we do not make it a requirement to believe one way or the other on it.

These issues are *not* the message of salvation. Of course they have a bearing on salvation, but the Scriptures are clear as to the conditions of salvation, and salvation does not depend on a particular view in any of these areas. The point is to focus upon the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Case Study: Over-reaction to the No-Repentance/No-Lordship Gospel

Some interpreters have over-reacted to the no-Lordship gospel by emphasizing submission and repentance to such an extent that they eclipse other Biblical ideas that we have addressed above. An instructive example is found in a Matthias Media tract available on the Internet,⁴² part of which is reproduced here:

The two ways to live	
A. Our way:	B. God's new way:
▫ Reject the ruler—God	▫ Submit to Jesus as our ruler
▫ Try to run life our own way	▫ Rely on Jesus' death and resurrection
Result:	Result:
▫ Condemned by God	▫ Forgiven by God
▫ Facing death and judgement	▫ Given eternal life

I do not believe the authors are trying to cleverly present a false gospel. Perhaps they are trying to make the parallels between our way and God's way too clean. And they certainly seem to be guilty of swinging the pendulum so far that their view appears to swing past a Lordship view of salvation. I call this a Lordship++ view.

Their presentation of the gospel should be changed to be closer to the Scriptural account in terms of the words used. For instance, "submit to Jesus as our ruler" is not stated that way in Scripture as a condition of salvation. Further on in the sequence of the web pages of the tract, submission is defined as "putting it into practice," "actually submitting" to Jesus. It can easily appear to the reader that this is a works-based approach. The command to "repent and believe the gospel" is not clearly given.⁴³

The need to know and believe in Jesus in terms of both His identity and His work is obscured by the focus on the unsaved person "submitting" and "relying." It must be made clear that Jesus is ruler because He is Lord, the Son of God. It must also be clear that He is Savior. Non-Lordship salvation errs by eliminating Christ's *Lordship*; Lordship++ salvation errs by obscuring Christ as *Savior*.

⁴² <http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/2wtl/box6.html>

⁴³ Granted, the word "rely" is used in the graphic reproduced above, and other pages in the tract do refer to "belief." Reading charitably, I believe the authors are trying to explain these concepts using other words.

Section 3: The Cause of Saving Faith: God

Sometimes I ask people the question, “On what basis are you saved?” I do so as a diagnostic to see where their thinking is relative to bottom-line cause of their salvation.

I have received some interesting responses. Many people say that the basis of their salvation is their faith. Admittedly, the question is perhaps a bit vague. I want the respondent to understand that the object of Christian faith is not our faith but is rather Jesus Christ. He is the source of merit; He is the objective basis and value of our salvation. Our faith is not a basis; it is rather a “channel” through which salvation’s blessings are delivered by God to us. The basis of salvation is very simple. It is not within ourselves. Rather, it is outside of ourselves. When asked what is necessary to get saved, we should not reflect in our testimony that our trust relies upon “a time when I believed.” Rather, we must correctly reflect that we believe in Jesus Christ (as elaborated in the previous section). We can certainly add that we recall first believing in Christ at such-and-such a point in our lives, but that we recognize it is Christ who saved us then, not we ourselves!

Other responses that are offered to the question of the bottom-line cause of salvation are answers like this:

- God decided it would be that way.
- The Holy Spirit worked in my life.
- The imputation of Christ’s righteousness.
- Regeneration, that is, the giving of new spiritual life to the spiritually dead.
- The offering up of God’s own Son.

It may be helpful to review the various levels of “causation” of salvation. We will see that faith is the last in a lengthy chain of causes that bring salvation to us.

Ultimate Cause

1. The **ultimate or “moving” cause** of salvation is God, not man. Salvation is from God, not from man. Its basis is in God’s grace, that is, his unmerited favor, and is connected with God’s mercy and love (Ephesians 2:4). It’s starting point is the will of God, by which God decided or decreed that He would provide salvation to mankind.

Thus I do not believe that God observes from his perch in eternity those people who will come to faith on their own and then decide to “elect” them. He rather actively works in them to bring about their salvation, and has planned to do so from the beginning of the world. See John 1:13.

Meritorious Cause

2. The **meritorious cause** of salvation is the pardon of sin and the alien righteousness of Christ which is imputed to the believer because of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is *his* merit, not our own, that saves. Thus we say we are “saved by Christ” (Gal 2:17) and by the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9), not of ourselves (Ephesians 2:8). We are born again through the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1:3).

Therefore, we cannot believe that we are saved because of righteousness that we exhibit, that is, personal or imparted righteousness.

Effective Cause

3. The **effective cause** of justification is the Spirit of God. He is the agent that produces repentance and faith through His ministry to the person. When we say *effective* we mean that which brings about the *effect* of salvation. God's will and grace are the starting point; and the righteousness of that Christ displayed in his life and the payment of sins is the "second step." But none of that does any good unless it is actually applied to the believer individually. See texts like Titus 3:5-6.

Instrumental Cause

4. The **instrumental cause** of salvation is the testimony of the gospel. We can say that we are saved "by the gospel." No one is saved apart from the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. See texts like James 1:18, 21; 1 Peter 1:23.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you **by our gospel**, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This assertion of salvation-through-the-gospel is true despite evangelical and liberal arguments to the contrary to the effect that the "un-evangelized" can be saved by whatever faith they have. In fact, they cannot. The response they have to the natural revelation available to them is a response of rejection, thus making them guilty and deserving of divine punishment (Romans 1:20).

Procuring or Obtaining Cause

5. The **procuring or obtaining cause** of salvation is faith, which receives the justification proclaimed through the gospel. Notice again 2 Thess. 2:13 where it mentions **belief in the truth**, which is absolutely required for anyone to be saved. Faith receives justification; it does not produce it. Thus we can say we are "saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8).

Notice that we do not have numbers 6, or 7, or 8 with concepts such as membership in a church or water baptism or participating in the mass or confirmation. These

Faith is never considered as a work in the Bible—the very idea of faith is opposed to the idea of works or wages, as we are told in Romans 4:1-5 and 11:6.

Once God has willed an individual's salvation, and provided the meritorious basis of that salvation, he sends the Spirit of God at some point into the person's life, along with the testimony of the gospel, and grants repentance and faith to the person. These various causes are also what we could call "conditions" of salvation, but only the last is the individual's part or role in the matter, and even the procuring cause of faith is a gift from God.

These events all happen, or none of them happen, for an individual. But it is never the case that some of them happen while the remainder fail to occur.

Section 4: The Extent of Saving Faith: Total Trust

It has been well said that saving faith is a response of whole man to the whole of Christ. It is a whole-hearted instead of a half-hearted response to Christ.

A Christian is one who believes, by an act of the mind, heart, and the will, in the person and work of Jesus Christ, including his deity and His offer of salvation from sin through His death, burial, and resurrection. This sort of belief is called “faith” in the Bible, but we should explain it more completely.

Faith includes activities of the intellect, emotion, and will. It has elements of repentance and submission included in it.

1. Mind

The Bible teaches us that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). This is the whole meaning of Good Friday and Easter. Christ did die and rose again, and the purpose of that was “for our sins” (substitution idea). In other words, with your mind you understand that you are a sinner and have fallen far short of God’s perfect standard. You must believe this to be a Christian. A related truth that you must understand is that you can’t improve yourself into a good person before you can be a Christian. No one can do that, “For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin” (Eccl. 7:20). In other words, you have to understand that only bad people become Christians! If you think you are good, then you will not understand the need to become a Christian.

But if I were to stop there, my definition of Biblical faith would be incomplete, because “even the demons believe—and tremble!” (James 2:19). Mere mental assent and knowledge is not enough. The demons certainly understand the information that is present in the Bible about sin and salvation. They have no personal interest in it, however. They are certainly not saved from their awful sin. So there must be more to the idea of Biblical faith. Belief includes not only an act of the mind but a corresponding and simultaneous act of the heart.

2. Heart

By the heart, I mean that you gladly accept for yourself the person and work of Christ. “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). This “welcoming” is more than just knowing the facts of the death, burial, and resurrection. It is accepting those truths gladly as applicable to YOURSELF (“Jesus died for MY sins”). You understand that YOU are a sinner, and in need of salvation lest you perish eternally. Not just out there and abstract, but personal application.

But again, if I were to stop there, my definition of Biblical faith would be incomplete. In explaining the parable of the soils, Jesus says, “he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For

when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles” (Matt. 13:20-21). This passage indicates a superficial reception of the message with joy, yet it is not a true reception because it is not lasting or transformative. There is “no root in himself.” Nothing has really happened to that person. No fruit is borne. So there must be more than knowledge and superficial acceptance for oneself.

3. Will

Biblical faith also encompasses the will or decision-making capacity of a person. You must decide to believe in Christ, to follow Him. You decide for yourself that your sin is wrong and you need to turn from it to Jesus. Then it could be said of you, as was of the Thessalonian church, that “you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). This includes the notion of repentance and the faith toward Jesus Christ. You actively seek God’s pardon, knowing you need it and wanting it.

Saving faith is submissive faith. It understands that Jesus Christ is the Lord (Romans 10:9-10). This is another way of saying that saving faith is humble faith (James 4:10). Certainly the believer has a need to grow in humility, but the total opposite—a proud, hard, “I will NOT do what God asks me to do” response to the gospel—does not agree with Biblical salvation by any stretch of the imagination. A cold “I don’t care” and “I’m not doing anything about that” response is worthy of divine wrath rather than divine blessing.

4. Culminating in Christ Himself

And so we have rounded out the definition of Biblical faith. It encompasses the mind, the heart, and the will. When so exercised, it is accompanied by a transforming work of God by which the person becomes a new person with new desires and a totally new direction.

Remember this above all else—it is not just the exercise of faith that saves, but the exercise of faith in JESUS CHRIST that saves (Acts 16:31). In the end, salvation is an eternal personal relationship, not a set of facts or doctrines, knowing Jesus Christ both now and forever (John 17:3). He is worthy of all worship and honor. As such, you become a follower of Jesus Christ when you become a Christian.

Many people follow many people or things. Perhaps it is Mohammed or Buddha or movie or sports stars or something else. A Christian follows Christ. And that is the decision that lies before a person who is asked to abandon their prior worldview and life direction to follow Jesus Christ.

Section 5: The Results of Saving Faith: Gifts from God

Technically, this section does not belong in a document purporting to be about the conditions of salvation since they are not conditions or pre-requisites, but rather results of God’s salvation. I will focus on two primary categories of benefits: judicial and experiential.

The Judicial Results of Saving Faith

These results are not felt, so they do not appear in the next sub-section. They are *non-experiential*. Other words used to describe them include *forensic* and *legal*.

The primary judicial aspect of salvation is what we call *justification*. This term refers to the fact that God constitutes a sinner as righteous in his sight, by imputing to the sinner the perfect righteous standing of Christ. Then, God declares the sinner as righteous, even though the sinner will not act perfectly righteously until he or she reaches heaven and final glorification. Finally, God treats the sinner as righteous. See 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Sometimes the concept of *forgiveness* is confused with justification. But it is a distinct idea. God forgives our sin when he releases us from obligation to pay the debt of sin. He wipes out our negative account with forgiveness; then He fills our account with the positive counterpart of forgiveness, which is justification. This legal transaction is not experienced in itself, but it will be experienced by the new believer when he or she realizes the blessing of having the weight of sins removed (Psalm 32:1). Similar blessings are part of the believer's life upon realization of each of these legal blessings.

Another judicial or *forensic* aspect of salvation is that God *adopts* a person into his family so that the person is a real part of God's household (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 4:5). Adoption into God's family is a great privilege because God takes us in and treats us as adult sons and daughters.

A fourth judicial aspect of salvation is *Spirit baptism*. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27, and Colossians 2:12, a person is placed into the body of Christ and in fact into Christ by the agency of the Holy Spirit. We could say that we are immersed into the body of Christ. Another way the Scripture explains this is to say that the believer is placed into *union* with Christ. This is a blessed connection with Christ that is attached to many blessings in the Christian life.

A fifth blessing God grants to the believer is that He grants him or her citizenship in the kingdom of God. Said another way, Christians are constituted as citizens of heaven (Ephesians 2:19 and Philippians 3:20). The new birth is that which brings a believer into new citizenship, as Jesus taught: "unless a person is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 6). This blessing is not "felt." It is just like a citizen of one country does not "feel" differently after being naturalized as a citizen of another country. Believers are truly "dual citizens" – citizens of this world and pilgrims in it, while citizens of a better country!

Can you think of other blessings that God gives to the Christian that fall under this heading?

The Experiential Results of Saving Faith

The over-arching experiential result of salvation is *regeneration*, that is, the giving of new spiritual life to the spiritually dead. Before salvation, Scripture evaluates each and every person as spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), that is, separated from God's life and sustenance. The transformation is so thoroughgoing that it can be said that the Christian is a new creation in Christ, with old things removed and new things replaced where the old once was.

God's grace is effective, not impotent. It results in a transformed life and a transformed mind, which is a repentant and changed mind. These are not hidden in a corner of the Christian's life, but are major components of it.

The *indwelling* of the Spirit of God is another experienced blessing of salvation, in which the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer's body and spirit. A better way to explain it is that the Spirit begins to work in a saving way and in a sanctifying way in the believer's life.

Another experiential result of salvation is *breaking of the power of sin* and the *impartation of righteousness*. Note that this is distinct from the imputation of righteousness that happens at justification (see above). In this, God works through the Spirit of God to enable the believer to live apart from sin. The believer will find that the dominating power of sin in his life is broken, so that sin does not have the mastery over the believer (Romans 6:14).

Other such gifts from the Holy Spirit specifically include the Spirit as a seal (divine ownership and guarantee), as a pledge (pledge and guarantee), filling (influence by and obedience to the Spirit), in fruit (character), and in spiritual gifts (ministry).

Can you think of other blessings that God gives to the Christian that fall under this heading?

Summary

If salvation only consisted of justification, it would be antinomian and would derail into licentiousness.

If salvation only consisted of a reformed life, it would be insufficient to achieve forgiveness and a right standing before God and it would derail into moralism or works-based salvation.

Both aspects are absolutely necessary.

Conclusion

In this study we have learned:

1. True Biblical, saving faith has to exhibit repentance concerning all sin.
2. True Biblical faith embraces Jesus Christ Himself, with the Bible's teaching about Who He is and what He did.
3. The cause of salvation is multi-faceted, from the ultimate cause of God to the obtaining cause of personal faith. Salvation is ultimately monergistic, using means of Christ's work and the Spirit's conviction and regeneration, alongside the preaching of the gospel.
4. Biblical faith entails the whole response of a person, including intellect, affections, and volition.
5. Saving faith results in a comprehensive salvation that deals with all of the problems that sin causes so that God as judge is satisfied and the saved person is radically transformed.

Appendix 1: Adjectives for Christian Faith

Christian faith is correctly described as:

1. Living faith
2. Working faith
3. Visible faith
4. Persevering faith
5. Practicing faith
6. Confident faith
7. Repentant faith
8. Confessing faith
9. Humble faith
10. Genuine faith
11. Strong faith
12. Submissive faith
13. Growing faith

True Biblical faith is distinguished from mere knowledge. It gives signs of life such as those described above—it produces works, it continues to remain alive, it grows, etc.

Appendix 2: Bible Passages that Use the Word Repentance or Turn

The following list of verses was constructed using BibleWorks, searching for all verses in ESV that contained a variation of the verb *repent*, or a variation of the phrase *change mind* or a variation of the verb *relent*. There are 115 verses.

NKJ Exodus 13:17 Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."

NKJ Exodus 14:5 Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

NKJ Exodus 32:12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth '? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.

NKJ Exodus 32:14 So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

NKJ Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

NKJ 2 Samuel 24:16 And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

NKJ 1 Kings 8:47 "yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness';

NKJ 1 Kings 8:48 "and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name:

NKJ 1 Chronicles 21:15 And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the LORD looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

NKJ 2 Chronicles 6:37 "yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, and have committed wickedness';

NKJ 2 Chronicles 6:38 "and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been carried captive, and pray toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and toward the temple which I have built for Your name:

NKJ Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

NKJ Psalm 7:12 If he does not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready.

NKJ Psalm 78:34 When He slew them, then they sought Him; And they returned and sought earnestly for God.

NKJ Psalm 106:45 And for their sake He remembered His covenant, And relented according to the multitude of His mercies.

NKJ Psalm 110:4 The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

NKJ Isaiah 1:27 Zion shall be redeemed with justice, And her penitents with righteousness.

NKJ Isaiah 57:6 Among the smooth stones of the stream Is your portion; They, they, are your lot! Even to them you have poured a drink offering, You have offered a grain offering. Should I receive comfort in these?

NKJ Jeremiah 4:28 For this shall the earth mourn, And the heavens above be black, Because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, Nor will I turn back from it.

NKJ Jeremiah 5:3 O LORD, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, But they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to return.

NKJ Jeremiah 8:6 I listened and heard, But they do not speak aright. No man repented of his wickedness, Saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turned to his own course, As the horse rushes into the battle.

NKJ Jeremiah 15:6 You have forsaken Me," says the LORD, "You have gone backward. Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am weary of relenting!

NKJ Jeremiah 18:8 "if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

NKJ Jeremiah 18:10 "if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

NKJ Jeremiah 26:3 'Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.'

NKJ Jeremiah 26:13 "Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; then the LORD will relent concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you.

NKJ Jeremiah 26:19 "Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and seek the LORD'S favor? And the LORD relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves."

NKJ Jeremiah 31:19 Surely, after my turning, I repented; And after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, Because I bore the reproach of my youth.'

NKJ Jeremiah 34:15 'Then you recently turned and did what was right in My sight-- every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor; and you made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name.

NKJ Jeremiah 42:10 'If you will still remain in this land, then I will build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up. For I relent concerning the disaster that I have brought upon you.

NKJ Ezekiel 14:6 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.

NKJ Ezekiel 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

NKJ Ezekiel 24:14 I, the LORD, have spoken it; It shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not hold back, Nor will I spare, Nor will I relent; According to your ways And according to your deeds They will judge you," Says the Lord GOD."

NKJ Daniel 4:16 Let his heart be changed from that of a man, Let him be given the heart of a beast, And let seven times pass over him.

NKJ Joel 2:13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

NKJ Joel 2:14 Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him-- A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God?

NKJ Amos 7:3 So the LORD relented concerning this. "It shall not be," said the LORD.

NKJ Amos 7:6 So the LORD relented concerning this. "This also shall not be," said the Lord GOD.

NKJ Jonah 3:9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

NKJ Jonah 3:10 Then God saw their works, that **they turned from their evil way**; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

NKJ Jonah 4:2 So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

NKJ Zechariah 1:6 Yet surely My words and My statutes, Which I commanded My servants the prophets, Did they not overtake your fathers? "So they returned and said: `Just as the LORD of hosts determined to do to us, According to our ways and according to our deeds, So He has dealt with us.'""

NKJ Zechariah 8:14 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: `Just as I determined to punish you When your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' Says the LORD of hosts, `And I would not relent,

NKJ Matthew 3:2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

NKJ Matthew 3:8 "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

NKJ Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

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

NKJ Matthew 11:20 Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent:

NKJ Matthew 11:21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

NKJ Matthew 12:41 "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

NKJ Matthew 13:15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'

NKJ Matthew 21:29 "He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went.

NKJ Matthew 21:32 "For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

NKJ Matthew 27:3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

NKJ Mark 1:4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of **repentance for the remission of sins**.

NKJ Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

NKJ Mark 4:12 "so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'"

NKJ Mark 6:12 So they went out and preached that people should repent.

NKJ Luke 1:16 "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

NKJ Luke 3:3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,

NKJ Luke 3:8 "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

NKJ Luke 5:32 "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

NKJ Luke 10:13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

NKJ Luke 11:32 "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

NKJ Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

NKJ Luke 13:5 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

NKJ Luke 15:7 "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

NKJ Luke 15:10 "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

NKJ Luke 16:30 "And he said, `No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

NKJ Luke 17:3 "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

NKJ Luke 17:4 "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, `I repent,' you shall forgive him."

NKJ Luke 24:47 "and that **repentance and remission of sins** should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

NKJ John 12:40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."

NKJ Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the **remission of sins**; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

NKJ 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,

NKJ Acts 5:31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

NKJ Acts 8:22 "**Repent** therefore **of this your wickedness**, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

NKJ Acts 9:35 So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

NKJ Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

NKJ Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

NKJ Acts 13:24 "after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

NKJ Acts 14:15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should **turn from these useless things** to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,

NKJ Acts 15:19 "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

NKJ Acts 17:30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

NKJ Acts 19:4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

NKJ Acts 20:21 "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

NKJ Acts 26:20 "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

NKJ Acts 28:6 However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

NKJ Acts 28:27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."

NKJ Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

NKJ 2 Corinthians 3:16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

NKJ 2 Corinthians 7:9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.

NKJ 2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

NKJ 2 Corinthians 12:21 lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.

NKJ 1 Thessalonians 1:9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

NKJ 2 Timothy 2:25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

NKJ Hebrews 6:1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

NKJ Hebrews 6:6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

NKJ Hebrews 7:21 (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, `You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek ' ")),

NKJ Hebrews 12:17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

NKJ 1 Peter 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

NKJ 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

NKJ Revelation 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

NKJ Revelation 2:5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent.

NKJ Revelation 2:16 `Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

NKJ Revelation 2:21 "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

NKJ Revelation 2:22 "Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

NKJ Revelation 3:3 "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

NKJ Revelation 3:19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

NKJ Revelation 9:20 But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

NKJ Revelation 9:21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

NKJ Revelation 16:9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

NKJ Revelation 16:11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.