

How do I receive salvation

What is repentance?

- <https://www.gotquestions.org/repentance.html>
- <http://faithsaves.net/repentance>
- <https://www.life4square.com/messages/wrongreasons.pdf>

Definition

Repentance.

Question: What comes to your mind when you hear the word repentance? (Don't try and "Christianize" it)

Some will define repentance as a "turning" from sin or a life opposed to God, to a life dedicated to obedience. This definition, while generally true, can be misunderstood and turn repentance into more than what it really is.

Repentance involves a changing of one's **mind**, which will **result** in changed actions. But changed actions in and of themselves are not necessarily signs of repentance.

This distinction is important, because I fear the natural takeaway for many is that repentance equals a changed life that lives for Jesus.

- The problem is some think they have to achieve a certain level of "holiness" as part of repentance.
- But when such a person inevitably fails and does something wrong, they think they must not have repented because they're still sinning, therefore they try harder to repent and please God with their life.
- Do you see the dangerous cycle here? They are setting an impossible goal, then getting angry at themselves when they can't reach that goal.
- Some may even get to the extreme that they conclude they can never repent of their sin and please God, because they can't seem to stop sinning, therefore the case is hopeless for them.
- It's really dangerous when that person starts to conclude that they haven't "meant it enough" when they previously tried to repent, so now they just have to "mean it more" next time. That's such a confusing place to be, because how do you measure how much you "meant" something, especially when you're talking about your eternal destination?

In reality, such a person has wrongly taken on the burden of perfecting themselves, something that only God can do.

Definition: We need to make it very clear that **repentance** is defined as:

- A change of mind that results in a change of action.
- It is an internal recognition of one's wrongdoing, that resolves to change course.
- It is **not** living differently per se; it is **thinking** differently that results in living differently for the **right reasons**.

We must separate the mental decision to change from living differently, because it's possible to live "rightly" but to think "wrongly".

Biblical Distinction between Repentance and Actions

This distinction between repentance and actions is made in the Bible in several places.

Apostle Paul before King Agrippa

- One of the clearest examples is when the apostle Paul was brought before King Agrippa and gave his testimony. Paul says:
- **Acts 26:20** I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.

John the Baptist

- Another example is John the Baptist, the forerunner and cousin of Jesus, who commanded the Jews to:
- **Luke 3:8** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Peter at Pentecost

- We also see the apostle Peter at Pentecost, just weeks after Jesus returned to heaven, commanding those present in Jerusalem to:
- **Acts 2:36-38**
 - 36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."
 - 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"
 - 38 Peter replied, "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."
- What is Peter asking the assembled Jews to repent of? To change their mind about Jesus, Whom they recently crucified, and accept the reality that Jesus actually is the Messiah.

There are more examples, but we see from these three that there is a distinction made between repentance and actions.

Repentance with regards to Salvation

If repentance is changing your mind about something and resolving to change your actions accordingly, how is this involved in placing our faith in Jesus Christ as part of salvation?

Look at Peter's encounter: the people were called to change their mind (repent) of their wrong conclusions about Jesus and believe the truth about Jesus (that he was the Messiah).

Because repentance is a changing of one's mind, it's very much integral to faith in Jesus. You can't really have faith in Jesus if you don't believe He exists, or if you don't believe that He truly is the Son of God, or that He can't actually cover your sins.

I would almost say that Biblical repentance and faith in Jesus Christ go hand in hand. You can't believe something is true without abandoning the false belief that opposes it. Here's a simple example.

Question/Example: If you wrongly used to believe that $(2+2=5)$, and then you're shown that $(2+2=4)$ is actually the correct answer, at the moment you realized the right answer, which came first?

- You rejected (or repented) that $(2+2=5)$?
- You accepted (placed faith in) that $(2+2=4)$?

That moment of comprehension and understanding happens all at once, where you recognize your previous thought or action was wrong, and agree that another course of action is the right one.

This is why you'll often hear some say that repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. They are technically different, but in reality that come as a package deal.

How do I know if I have Repented?

This leads to a question, though: how do you know if you've actually repented?

I suggest there's a simple test.

Do you agree with God about yourself?

- Do you agree that you have broken God's laws?
- Do you agree that you cannot work your way into God's perfect heaven?
- Do you agree that God is perfectly just if He punishes you for breaking His law?

The Bible teaches us that people, before they are saved by God, do not understand or know the things of God because they are spiritually discerned.

If you're here today and you find yourself thinking, "you know, I'm a pretty good person, I haven't done anything that bad in my life; God should probably let me into heaven"; I suggest you do not agree with God, and I pray that you will ask God to change your mind and draw you to Him.

If you don't agree with God about what He says about you, then you're not in a position to put faith in Him, because you think He's a liar, and we don't trust liars.

Repentance results in Actions

As we conclude this section on repentance, I do want to clarify that repentance **does result** in a changed life.

If someone came to you and said that they repented of their sins and turned to God, and it's awesome because they can still continue in all their sins because they don't have to actually change, I feel confident in saying they did not actually repent of their sins.

It would be like someone saying they believe ($2+2=4$), but next time they did their taxes they added up ($2+2=5$).

What I am trying to avoid is the thought that you have to live a sinless, perfect life as soon as you get saved, and if you don't, then you conclude you aren't saved, and wind up in a perpetual cycle of "getting saved" over and over because you think that repentance is the same as outward performance.

The Bible teaches us that there is a progression to the Christian life, and it begins at the moment we recognize our sin for what it is, and accept Jesus for Who He is.

If we try and take the perfect Christian life and put that as the first step of being a believer, you're setting yourself up for failure and will spend years of your life angry and frustrated at yourself because you just can't "cut it" or didn't "mean it enough" when you repented.

I know, because that was me for many years.