

# Criteria For Salvation

Many people since the Early Church have argued about what it takes to be saved. However, God has provided us with the basic criteria for salvation even as far back as the Book of 1 Kings. Throughout the Bible, He repeats the message over and over again both in the Old and New Testaments.

Here is what God says:

1 Kings 8:47 & 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 those who took them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness'**;

Notice, God is only seeking that His people repent and pray to Him, admitting that they are wrong and have committed wickedness, aka sin.

2 Chronicles 33:10

And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.

Why were Manasseh and his people destroyed? They would not listen to God. They would not repent.

Jeremiah 25:5

They said, '**Repent** now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.

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.

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.**

Hosea 6:1

Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.

Hosea 11:5

"He shall not return to the land of Egypt; But the Assyrian shall be his king, **Because they refused to repent.**

Why were the people suffering and enslaved by Assyria? They refused to repent.

Joel 2:12

"Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

Amos 5:4

For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: "Seek Me and live;

What happens when people repent and seek Him? They live.

Matthew 3:2

"**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Matthew 3:8

Therefore bear fruits worthy of **repentance**,

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.

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 9:13

But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to **repentance**."

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**:

Matthew 11:21 and 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 in sackcloth and ashes.

Matthew 12:41 and Luke 11:32

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.

Who repented? The people of Nineveh - enemies of Israel. Why were they not destroyed? Because they repented.

Mark 1:4

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of **repentance for the remission of sins**.

Mark 1:15

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent**, and believe in the gospel.”

Mark 2:17

When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to **repentance**.”

Mark 6:12

So they went out and preached that people should **repent**.

Luke 3:3

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of **repentance for the remission of sins**,

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.

Luke 5:32

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to **repentance**.”

Luke 13:1, 3, and 5

There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** you will all likewise perish.

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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.

Luke 15:10

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who **repents**.”

Luke 16:30

And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will **repent**.'

What did the man in Hell think would keep his loved ones from Hell? Repentance.

Luke 17:3

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and **if he repents, forgive him**.

What brings forgiveness? Repentance.

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."

Luke 24:47

and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

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.

Now notice, Peter says to Repent. Then he adds "let every one of you be baptized." He doesn't say "In order to be saved, you must repent AND be baptized." Repentance is the key. Baptism comes after.

Acts 3:19

**Repent** therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Acts 5:31

Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give **repentance** to Israel and **forgiveness of sins**.

Notice that repentance leads to the forgiveness of sins. Nothing else.

Acts 8:22

**Repent** therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

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."

Acts 13:24

after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of **repentance** to all the people of Israel.

Acts 17:30

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to **repent**,

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."

Notice in all of these things, what is baptism? It is an act of repentance. However, repentance is still always the key. We SHOULD be baptized, every one of us. It is like an inauguration. We are ordained citizens of the Kingdom of God when we are baptized, and we are officially made Joint Heirs to the Throne of God when we are baptized.

Without baptism, we are like people who receive citizenship in a country, but there is no public, official ceremony. Technically, we are a citizen of the country, but officially we are not. Baptism makes us official citizens and Joint Heirs of the Kingdom of God. Unless you are baptized with water and the Spirit, as Jesus said in John 3, you cannot officially enter into the Kingdom of God. You are like unofficial citizens until you receive baptism. Are you saved if you repent but don't get baptized? Sure. However, you have no power and authority as a Joint Heir - a Prince or Princess - of the Kingdom of God until you are officially proclaimed a Joint Heir. After all, no Prince or Princess has authority over anything in their Father's Kingdom until the Father officially declares them to have authority. Baptism, therefore, is required for power and authority in your life.

Acts 20:21

testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, **repentance** toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," is part of the requirement for repentance. Jesus is the "way, the truth, and the life." He is the "only way to get to God." Therefore, you must repent toward God and have faith toward Jesus that because of His sacrifice for our sins, we are forgiven.

Simply repenting of sins and doing good puts you on unstable ground. Sure, He MIGHT maybe still judge you in a way where He lets you into Heaven because you repented and He doesn't think you deserve burning alive in a Lake of Fire for all eternity, but you certainly won't be a Joint Heir to the Throne of God nor will you experience all the benefits of being a Child of God. Also, you're severely playing with fire when you do not accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Again, you are on shaky ground at best, and there is a very good chance you won't be allowed into

Heaven. ONLY forgiveness from Jesus will save you. ONLY by accepting the King will the King allow you into His land. If you reject the King, why would He let you into His land? You are a rebel who refuses to bend a knee to the King.

So be on the safe side. If you're going to repent anyway, accept Jesus as Lord also. Otherwise, you have entirely missed the most important part of repentance. Accept the King. Become a citizen and Joint Heir to the Throne of God. Repentance is the hard part, but the hardest part is putting down your pride and bending a knee to the King - admitting that you are wrong and His way is right. You have to be willing to honor the King if you want to live in the King's Kingdom.

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.**

Some argue that works is vital for salvation, and if you don't do good works, you aren't saved. Some argue that we are saved by grace through faith. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one can boast.

But Acts 26:20 tells us that repentance means turning to God and DOING works befitting of repentance. Couple this with many of the teachings of the Book of James, and what you find is that IF you are truly saved - if you genuinely accept Jesus as Lord - you WILL do good works. You see, when you repent, you turn from your sinful ways and turn to God's ways. When you do this, you will automatically start doing good works. Why? Because the Holy Spirit lives in you and is prompting you to change and start doing good instead of evil.

So doing good works isn't required for salvation, but it is a byproduct of salvation. Remember what Jesus said? "You will know them by their fruits." A good person produces good works. An evil person produces evil works. Therefore, the sign of a person who is saved is that they will love God above all else and love one another as themselves. A sign of a person who is not saved but says they are a Christian is that they will not care about what God really thinks or what He really cares about - which is people - and they won't care about others but will care more about themselves than anyone else.

And so, what we find here is that the fake Christian is the cultist Christian who is abusive and cutting and mocking and cruel and harsh and mean and tries to bully and beat people into submission to the "Law of God". They are strict and authoritarian and will use the Bible to control people. They will use guilt and condemnation to control people. They will be slow to forgive and quick to anger. They will condemn others constantly, telling them that they are all going to Hell and the Lake of Fire unless they stop doing this sin or that.

Meanwhile, the true Christian is the one who does tell people that Hell and the Lake of Fire are real, but they are loving and encouraging. They are quick to forgive and overlook offenses.

They are individuals who listen more than speak, and when they speak they try to do so with the other person's feelings and opinions in mind. They still speak the truth, because they know the truth is what is best for everyone, but they do so in love and with patience and gentleness. THESE are the fruits of the Spirit.

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**?

2 Corinthians 7:9-10

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. For godly sorrow produces **repentance** leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Notice here Paul's words back up what I just said above about the true Christian. Paul was harsh to the Corinthians, but he did this in love. As a result, they repented, and this made him rejoice. He corrected them in love, and then he praised them for accepting his correction and changing their ways. He didn't WANT to correct them, and he didn't do it just because he was angry with them or because he wanted to manipulate or control them. He was only looking out for their best interest. They recognized this, and they were sorry for what they did and thus changed their ways.

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.

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,

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,

What is the foundation? Repentance. Only repentance is the foundation. This repentance is from dead works - meaning evil and abusive and selfish actions - and it is only effective if it is coupled with faith toward God.

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.

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.

Why was he (Esau, Jacob's brother) rejected? He found no place for repentance. Though he was sorry and shed tears, his heart was still not in the right place. This is absolutely pivotal. God never asked you to be sorry for your sins. Being sorry doesn't cut it. This is VERY important. You must not just be sorry. You must be sorry unto repentance, as it was mentioned above.

What does that mean? A person who is like Esau is a person who keeps saying they are sorry, but after someone forgives them they go right back to doing the thing they said they were sorry about. This is the liar, for example, who keeps lying and saying he's sorry. This doesn't cut it. This isn't repentance. This is the sorrow that will be rejected.

Repentance means that you are turning your back on those things. It is the liar who stops lying because they are genuinely sorry for lying. It is the thief who actually stops stealing because he is genuinely sorry he stole. It is the cheater who stops cheating because he genuinely wants to repair things with his wife.

Being sorry doesn't lead to salvation. Only repentance leads to salvation. You have to be MORE than sorry. You have to want to change. You have to want to do as Jesus always instructed people He forgave. "Go and sin no more."

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**.

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**.

How will your lampstand be removed - meaning how will you lose your salvation? If you go back to your sinful ways and refuse to repent of them. Don't be like Solomon who started off wholly devoted to God, but later in life he married foreign women and let them influence him so that he stopped pursuing God's ways. In exchange, he started following after the ways of his countless wives. Thus, God punished Solomon because he refused to repent

Revelation 2:16

**Repent**, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

What leads to destruction? A refusal to repent.



Revelation 2:21

And I gave her time to **repent** of her sexual immorality, and she did not **repent**.

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**.

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.

Revelation 3:19

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and **repent**.

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.

Revelation 9:21

And **they did not repent** of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

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**.

Revelation 16:11

They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, **and did not repent of their deeds**.

See? Over and over again, the story is the same all throughout the Bible from beginning to end. Repentance is all God wants from us. He wants us to acknowledge Him as God and King and turn from our ways and towards His ways. That's it. There is no other criteria for salvation. Repent and be saved. Refuse to repent and be destroyed. It's just that simple.