



K



What **I** **of Salvation?**



N

PRAYER
HOPE
FAITH
TRUST
BELIEF

D REPENTENCE

David C. Mills
Born2Serve Ministries
March 22, 2005

this page was intentionally left blank

As defined by the WordNet databaseⁱ, salvation, as it pertains to Christianity, is the act of delivering from sin or saving from evil. It stands to reason, that one who is delivered from something should have no desire to return back to its bondage. So I contemplate, what kind of salvation is it, that one should receive and yet show no distaste for that which they have been delivered from?

The Bible explains that salvation comes by way of two things. First, one needs to repent of their sins toward God, and secondly, one must believe the Gospel which is clearly laid out in I Corinthians chapter 15. Simply put in Jesus' own words, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). I believe that this requires us to define these two terms: repent and believe.

First, we will discuss the latter of the two, which is to "believe". What does it mean to believe the gospel? Recently I have been motivated to question if a person has the ability to believe the gospel in their "head" (that being intellectual knowledge) and yet not have obtained salvation because they have not applied it to their heart (that being spiritual application and understanding).

Two hundred and twenty one times we see in the New Testament, the word pronounced pist-yoo'-o being used and

G4100
πιστεύω
pisteuō
pist-yoo'-o
From G4102; to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), that is, credit; by implication to entrust (especially one's spiritual well being to Christ): - believe (-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with.
Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

translated either believe, believed or believeth. This word clearly means to entrust, especially one's spiritual well being to Christ, to commit, and to put trust with. Having said that, I believe that true belief is a saving belief. There are no white lies that are not

lies, just as there is no belief that is not true, biblical, saving, trusting, committed, faith-filled belief. One who truly believes the gospel will not doubt it, correct it or attempt to explain any part of it away. For one to believe the gospel they must understand that they are a sinner (how that Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15)) in need of Christ's redemption and justification. Thus, the acknowledgement of sin is an attribute of belief and both are required as a part of saving faith. However, belief alone is not all that is required for salvation, as we can see in James 2:19 "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

That leads us back to the former, repentance. If one has truly believed the gospel, understands it, and has accepted that they are a sinner in need of a Savior, it leaves salvation just one decision away. That decision is it to accept the gift of salvation or to reject it, and to accept it one must repent. Repentance, by definition, is the turning away from sin, the turning to God that results in a change of life. This is clearly displayed and defined in scripture where we read in Acts 26:19-20, "that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Repentance is a crucial key to biblical evangelism and salvation;

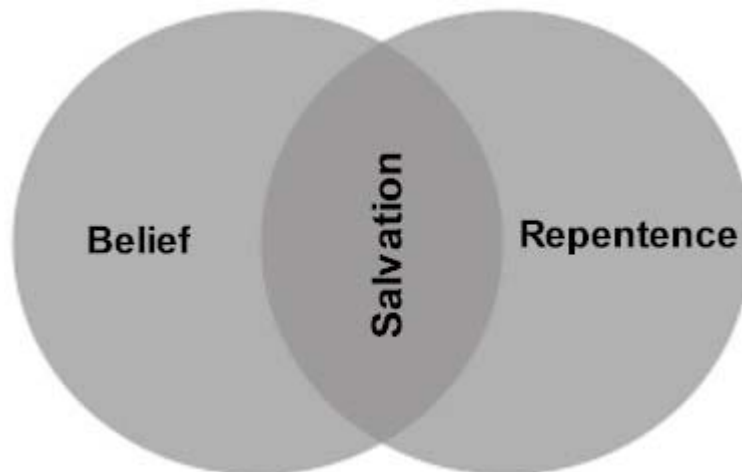
**I tell you, Nay: except
you repent, ye shall all
likewise perish**

-Luke 13:5

John the Baptist, all the apostles, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself preached repentance. Repentance is the Bible way of dealing with sin and it is God's purpose in dealing with sinners. This is exactly why we must deal specifically with sin in our evangelism and presentation of biblical salvation. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard a preacher say something like "you don't have to stop the sin you are in" or "don't worry about the sin you are involved in", as well as other "feel good" adages.

Understandably, it is sinners that need saving. However, they say these things without stressing the repentive desire that one should possess, wanting to stop sinning because of the recognition that it is offensive to God. If a person truly understands their condition, their penalty and the price which was paid by Christ Jesus, they will not want to offend Him any longer. Thus, repentance is an action separate from belief. It is also not simply a turning from unbelief to belief, as it is more than just turning from that one sin. Repentance is also not simply the recognition of and sorrow for sin as we can see by the examples in Esau and Judas' lives. Tears alone don't save. Also, as it has been pointed out to me, we need to be very careful of those who would like to redefine the terms of repentance, such as the Church of Christ. They speak of a man centered, man initiated, man accomplished work. It is nothing less than the supernatural work of God in a responsive sinner's life; "it is part of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion that produces post-salvation fruit".ⁱⁱ

So, is it possible for someone to have saving belief and yet still reject the gospel? I believe so, because both repentance and belief are required and at the point where they overlap, is the point of salvation.



I believe that I personally lived for seven years in belief, without repentance. How dangerous that was! I believed the gospel, understood it and tried to live the Christian life, but there was no true repentance for my sin. It was on the afternoon of February 4th, 1997 that through the work of the Holy Spirit that I truly repented for my sin toward God. If that was the case, it was at that point the true salvation took place. Many pastors have stated that they believe that 75 to 90% of the church membership where they pastored was still lost.ⁱⁱⁱ As a matter of fact, Dr. Monroe Parker said, "If we could get half the church members saved, we would see a great revival" I believe that many of those are unsaved as a result of belief without repentance.

So that leaves us understanding some of the differences as well as the importance of both belief and repentance. It is clear that true conversion unto salvation (Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out (Acts 3:9)) requires the presence and application of both independently.

It is clearly seen today, among neo-evangelicals and sacredly among many fundamentalists of yesteryear that the doctrine of repentance is being completely left out of their gospel presentation. As that is being done, the emphasis is being put on a prayer, as the main focal point. People are being told to "pray a prayer" for salvation void of any instruction of repentance, or sadly even belief on the Lord Jesus Christ at times. Many times it is simply given as an escape from a bad place (called... well... "the bad place") to a good place called Heaven. "Let me ask you, where would you rather be? Then just pray this prayer!" The emphasis at this point then becomes one of "faith" and "prayer", and not "repentance" and "belief". The focus is now on heaven, God's blessings, and the love

of God, while leaving out the holiness of God, His righteous demands upon mankind and the essential need for repentance.

So the question is, what kind of salvation requires the sinner's prayer? I am not diminishing the importance of prayer. However, there is only one prayer that God hears from a lost person and that is one that is drenched in belief and saturated with repentance. Albert Barnes stated that "The only prayers which God will not hear are those which are offered in mockery, or when the man loves his sins and is unwilling to give them up." Indeed. How is a sinner, who is unrepentant, able to pray to God for anything? Psalms 66:19 clearly states that "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*". In addition to that, I find no where in scripture where one is told to pray for salvation, only repent and believe.

One of the verses that some have used to support this "prayer-BASED-salvation" is Romans 10:9, which reads "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." They have stated that the confession with thy mouth is indeed referring to the "sinner's prayer". I believe that a careful study of the passage reveals that the confession that is spoken of is a public pronouncement of their faith, which is expounded on in verse 11 as it stated that "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed". I believe this is belief followed by a profession of discipleship. If the physical act of praying were required for salvation, would not this be a function of works. However, as a physical act after salvation it is a fruit, as well as a work of and prayer of faith, as spoken of by James.

I think that a brief reminder of what prayer is would be beneficial at this point. Prayer is primarily a form of worship. It is a time of adoration where which one makes supplications and gives thanksgiving with contrition (repentance). This can be seen clearly in the model prayer as given by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter 6. Throughout this prayer, the focus is always on worshipping, repenting, and praising God. It is interesting in John 9:31 that we read “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.”

Having said that, I have to question the “corrosion” of prayer in the evangelism and the “salvation” of souls today. Please hear me when I say the “corrosion” of prayer. Again, I am not saying that prayer does not have a part, the question is, what part?

I believe that true conversion takes place in person’s life prior to any prayer that might be spoken. I believe that when true repentance takes place in one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, it is at that point that they are born-again into the family of God. I believe that the prayer that “might” follow is one of worship and praise and that true salvation has taken place prior to that prayer.

What kind of salvation is followed by a prayer? The kind of salvation that the publican received prior to worshipping God with the words “God be merciful to me a sinner”, that is the kind of salvation this is. The kind of salvation that Paul received prior to worshipping God with the words “What wilt thou have me to do?”, that is the kind of salvation this is. The kind of salvation that Zacchaeus received as was evident by his fruits to follow, that is the kind of salvation this is. Time after time after time, throughout scripture, we see examples of the fruit which salvation produces. Every time

that we see a soul saved in the Word of God, we see a drastic change in their life style and spiritual life. The kind of salvation which results in a changed life is the kind this is!

However, that is not the kind of “salvation” that is produced through “easy-prayerism^{iv}”, or “pray-BASED-salvation”. I believe that those using the techniques of “easy-prayerism” are critically damaging untold numbers of souls for eternity. They are targeting those who show only an interest in Christ and a willingness to pray a prayer. I say critically, because with this false profession, they are given false security.

Two things that I have learned while teaching Bible study in the protective custody unit of our county prison was that everyone is innocent and most everyone gets “religious”. In this atmosphere, since they have an “interest” in spiritual things, it would be very easy to get the inmates to pray a prayer. They will indeed enjoy hearing about a God that can fix all their problems, if that is your ploy. However, rarely will you get a prisoner to repent. Sadly, the few that I had “felt” were sincere either returned or since have not sought the things of the Lord. Jesus said that “If a man love me, he will keep my words”. He also said that “ If ye love me, keep my commandments.”. Both of these call for changed lives whereby one would turn “to God from idols to serve the living and true God;”. Both of these require a person to turn from sin to God, which would inherently result in a change of life.

It is not about numbers, it is not about prayers, it is not about penance or turning over a new leaf. It is about sinful man being convicted by the Holy Spirit, repenting of their sin toward a Holy, Holy, Holy God and believing on His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation, where with a person is then converted into a new creature, with new desires

which are visible by a new way of life. There has been a payment made and a penalty paid to all who will repent and believe.

I recently conducted an online web survey of a cross section of people that I have had email correspondence with (those in both my personal and work address books), which include both born-again and unsaved individuals. The following are the questions that were asked of them:

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?
2. Do you believe that He died as the Bible says He did?
3. Do you believe that He died to pay for your sin?
4. Do you believe that He was buried in a tomb?
5. Do you believe that He rose from the dead after three days as the Bible says, from that tomb?
6. Do you believe that you are a sinner, which commits sins?
7. Does it bother you when you sin? (lie, cheat, steal, think sexual thoughts, etc)
8. Would you like to stop sinning?
9. Would you rather not stop these types of things, just as long as no one else new about it?
10. Do you want to stop sinning because it offends God?
11. Have you really thought about these things before?
12. Would you call yourself a Christian?
13. Would you call yourself a “born-again” Christian?
14. Do you think that turning from sin, to God, that results in a change of life is a necessity for salvation?
15. Do you believe that simply believing that there is a God, and by being a “good person” you will be able to get to heaven?
16. Explain briefly why you would or would not call yourself a Christian.

Everyone who responded to the survey stated that they “believed” that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, died on the cross as the Bibles says and did so to pay for their sin. They also stated that they “believed” that He was buried in a tomb from which after three days He was resurrected. Ninety-nine point nine percent of those who responded, also stated that they recognized that they were sinners, and that their sin was offensive to God. By most Bible preaching standards, and by the simple preaching of I Corinthians 15, these

are all born-again believers. However, interestingly enough, 47% self admittedly stated that they were not born-again Christians. So how is it that so many can “believe” and yet not be saved? I believe that it is because of their rejection of the Holy Spirit’s working, it is belief without repentance. Consequently, I am quite sure I could get many of these people to pray a prayer.

In conclusion, the Word of God explains to us that God’s work of salvation is such, that it will transform the life of its host. Being in Christ, that person “is” a new creature, whose ways and desires of old will be no more, as “all” things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17). The true test of salvation lies in the evidence of the fruits thereof, and as the “Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:” (Romans 8:16). “When you say “I am a child of God”, does the Spirit say “AMEN”?”^v

It continues to remain our responsibility to stress, teach and preach the pathway to true salvation. What kind of salvation, Biblical salvation, birthed only by Holy Spirit repentance and belief on the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to do so for the sake of our church members and for the sake of a lost and dying world, so that one day they do not hear the words... “I never knew you”.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;...
...And then will I profess unto them,

Mathew 7:21-23

Bibliography

Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Electronic Database.
Biblesoft, 1997.

Repentance is More than a Sinner's Prayer, Way of Life Literature
David W. Cloud, 1999-2000.

Biblical Salvation, James A. Stewart
Revival Literature, 2004.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database.
Biblesoft, 1997.

Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity, Way of Life Literature
David W. Cloud, 1993, 1997.

Wilmington's Guide to the Bible, H.L. Wilmington
H.L. Wilmington, 1981, 1984.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Hendrickson Publishing
James Strong

Articles by David W. Cloud, Way of Life Literature Website, www.wayoflife.org

- Easy Prayerism
- Fasting and Prayer for Evangelism.
- Fundamental Baptists and Quick Prayerism A Faulty Method of Evangelism Has Produced A Change In The Doctrine Of Repentance.
- How To Avoid False Professions
- King Of Shallow Soul Winning Says Our Soul Winning Has Become Shallow

i WordNet database, Copyright 2001, Princeton University

ii Pastor Peter Laitres, North Baptist Church, Brockton, MA

iii Dr. B. R. Lakin 75%, Dr. A. W. Tozer 90%, W. A. Criswell 75%, Finley Edge 90%, J. Harold Smith 75%, R. G Lee 75%

iv "easy-prayism" term Coined by David W. Cloud

iv Unknown