

A Few Hundred Pages

“Repent” could be the most important quote of all time (<https://789graceplace.com/blog/item/legacy-of-the-pandemic>). But for this to be the case personally we must understand its true meaning: not primarily (as we may wrongly think) that which we turn FROM, rather, far more importantly, what we repent (or turn) TO. Because many people (as highlighted in numerous *Bible* examples) repent from one set of sins to another, equally bad if not worse; famously giving up (as one humorous “ditty” puts it) “drinking, smoking, chewing or going with girls who do” and, in the process, becoming self-righteous, further from God than before!

No, the primary focus of Jesus’ great “Repent” quote is that which He commands (and the *Bible* details) we must repent TO; not sinning less, being better or being the best we can be, trying hard to be good . . . or any other scheme we can dream up. Jesus, indeed the entire *Bible*, self-proclaims “Repent” has a very precise, limited and narrow meaning that “few find.”

The liberal minister will surely say: “I have little in common with the *Bible*-thumping reactionary preachers (except that maybe we both ‘believe in Jesus’)” while the conservative preacher will agree, “. . . except I am not sure the liberals (certainly the radical liberals do not) *really* believe in Jesus.”

Yes, they have one key point in common (they “believe in Jesus”). And this is what they both likely base their confidence and assurance on; because, after all, isn’t that what the *Bible* says is foundational to eternal salvation? ABSOLUTELY! But “case” not so quickly closed.

What Does “Believe in Jesus” Mean (and Not Mean)?

Since the liberal will accept this assurance and confidence from the *Bible* (even while, at the same time, rejecting much else that the *Bible* says), it is only right to refer to the *Bible* to see what “believe in Jesus” means.

For there is a potentially very frightening statement in the *Bible* that makes it clear that “any old” believing in Jesus is not a ticket to heaven as some superstitiously and wrongly proclaim:

“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.” James 2:19

With the context further explaining:

“Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder. You foolish man . . . a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.” James 2:18 - 24

“Whew,” both the liberal and conservative will say: “I certainly have good works I can show God.”

But, again, not so quick – are they the RIGHT good works? “What do you mean are they the right good works? I don’t know what you are saying.” Then we need to refer back to the “for” of our salvation – what God says, in the *Bible*, is the reason for and evidence of a right “believing in Jesus:”

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. **For** we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:8-10

Exact, precise, unique and personal good works for each and every individual “believer,” not good works we, ourselves, decide to do.

“I am even more confused,” some, at this point, will say: “How in the world will I know what all these good works are?”

Aah! That is the Key!

We have to “believe in Jesus,” meaning not merely that He lived (any good pagan historian knows that), but we have to “believe **in** Jesus.”

And while there is too much to say here, in a few hundred pages of the *Bible* (initially and most notably in the *New Testament*) we find He has clearly and precisely said about those who truly (to eternal life) “believe in Him” - the evidence and signs of this belief (and the signs of unbelief even in the face of those who falsely say “I believe in Jesus”).

“Everyone **who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” Matthew 7:24-27

Some (if not the most) confident people, when they die and go to heaven, will say and be told by Jesus:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” *Matthew 7:21-23*

These were people who:

1. “Believed in Jesus”
2. Did good works (as they chose and defined them) in His name.

But they did not do the good works which “God prepared in advance for [them] to do.” Just as Adam and Eve had one assigned “test” that they failed, we, in this Christian age, have a single pass/fail test for entry into heaven. Jesus says (where else but in the *Bible*):

“I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.” *Matthew 12:31*

“What is this Holy Spirit?” even many church-going folks will ask: “Yes, I have heard Him mentioned, but I really don’t know his significance or the above issue and point.”

Very simply, the Holy Spirit:

- Will, and must, indwell every true believer.
- This is the only way and reliable sign a person “believes in Jesus” as the *Bible* defines this.

Those to whom Jesus said “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” were those without the Holy Spirit.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Jesus gives us the really Good News by telling us:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” *Matthew 7:7-8*

and

“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” *Luke 11:13*

God’s offer is to everyone and life gives us one chance (more than adequate time) to rightly “believe in Jesus.” What, then, will be anyone’s excuse for depending on a superficial “Well, I believe in Jesus” when the *Bible* many thousand times makes it clear this is not sufficient for salvation? Will a legitimate excuse be?

- “I didn’t have time to read a few hundred pages,” at least for a start to know there is more to “I believe in Jesus” than a mere (and meaningless to eternal life) confession?
- “I tried to read the *Bible* a few times, but it didn’t make sense to me.” Was this your approach to far far far lesser other areas of learning in life - to give it a try or two and give up?
- “I listened to my preacher and really feel I was doing all I needed to do. In fact, my preacher actually cast doubt on the reliability and current relevance of the *Bible* in the 21st Century.” But this won’t fly because these few hundred pages warns us that many church leaders (most in certain “down” periods of time) are wrong! Just as in many ways we know are responsible for our own lives, not just to blindly follow what others say, how much more is this obviously true for our eternal lives?
- “Everybody else . . .” STOP there! This didn’t work when we were 6, it isn’t at the point of entry into eternity after we have had 70, 80 . . . years to study a few hundred pages - and we were too busy to do so?

The focus of the authentic Christian life will be devoted to “getting it” better and better – an ocean cannot contain all the Holy Spirit is, offers and does for those who truly “believe in Jesus.” The great importance and necessity of the Holy Spirit is that He is the One Who speaks to and empowers us to do what Christ has told us to do, including the good works God has uniquely planned in advance for every Christian.

Maybe the *Bible’s* best picture of the Holy Spirit? *Psalms* 23. For without His “making,” “leading,” “restoring,” “guiding,” “comforting,” “preparing,” “anointing” . . . we will never, ever, truly and effectively “believe in Jesus” any more than the pagan historian who knows **of** Jesus, but does not **believe in** Him.

A few hundred amazing (not just eternally beneficial, but vital for here and now as well) life-giving pages. Yet, sadly (and equally for most CHURCH GOING PEOPLE) it is seldom if ever read. Can we claim “I believe in Jesus” when we don’t know what He says this *really* means in a few hundred pages, His **only** written words to and for us?

“Repent:” that which we must turn TO as true “believing in Him” which He so graciously details for us in His Word and which He promises to give us as we rightly seek Him for it.

And to ensure we are (and remain) on the saving path we are told to:

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? ²
Corinthians 13:5

How and where to examine ourselves? In God's provided few hundred pages!

“Believe in Jesus!”

The one test we cannot afford to fail!