

## BELIEVING ON THE LORD JESUS

There is much talk of there being "other gospels" one of which focuses only on the love of God and His wanting to bless His people. That's a good, warm and fuzzy message isn't it? What could even be implied is that just because you are in the building hearing the speakers's message, that you are in fact, one of God's people that he is referring to. If we were to stop at that, what we would have is what has been called the "prosperity message", that God loves you and wants to bless you and that you just need to believe THAT, and receive His blessings. The message would go something like, "God loves you and wants to bless you, for God IS love after all (that is where they can rip the "God is love" out of context from I John 4:7-8)...That God is love and He has a great plan for your life "to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). The only caveat to that is you have to "ask and you shall receive" (Matthew 7:7-8). On the surface it sounds good, the preacher's using lots of Scriptures. The preacher may even say that Jesus died on the cross for their sin and that if they will just believe that, and believe that God raised Him from the dead, they will be saved. A shining example in Scripture is in the much quoted and beloved Scripture of evangelists everywhere in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." You may at this point be ready to say, "hold on brother, that IS the gospel of Jesus Christ, just believing Jesus died for our sins and accepting God's free gift of salvation." Yes, it could even be reemphasized that to be saved one must only believe, just as Romans 10:9-10 says, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." To further drive the message home, Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." So then from all that, it can be said that Christ alone is our righteousness and that we can never be righteous enough to be saved as Paul said in I Corinthians 1:30-31, "But of Him (God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."" Even I will say AMEN but...

But what about leaving out any mention of repentance (turning away from one's sin against God). What role does repentance have in regards to those Scriptures that just say to believe and you will be saved? For we know that our own works won't save us and our righteousness and salvation come from Christ alone. Let us take a look for repentance in the Scriptures and find out how it plays a part in the Gospel message and in believing towards our salvation.

Since the gospel message of Jesus Christ rests on Jesus Himself, we can read about the life and ministry of Jesus in the first four books of the New Testament and they are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and they are called gospels because they are the good news of Jesus Christ as was viewed, heard, and understood by their respective authors.

Now Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels which means "seeing together", because they are similar in their narrative of the life of Jesus, even though they do also have their differences. No one person of course will see a situation the same as another, therefore the differences. The book of John though is quite different from the Synoptics. One big difference is that the book of John is the only gospel that has no parables. Also, out of the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John only one of them has no mention of any form of the word repent (repent, repented, repentance, etc.) and that is the book of John. In the New Testament of the King James Bible the word repent comes up 22 times (See list at the bottom). The word believe though appears 123 times in the same New Testament! Before you start drawing conclusions by thinking I'm building a case for BELIEVING OVER REPENTING, I would ask that you be patient with me, for as all good stories take time to develop.

BELIEVING OVER REPENTING-let's bookmark that for now as we will revisit it in a bit.

It is important to keep in mind at this point that the Gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't begin and end with His time on this earth; as in fact it began even before the Creation.

Are you now thinking, "whoa, you lost me brother". Well, if I may, I'm using a plot device that authors use in fiction novels where they go back in time to add more insight into the plot and in developing the characters. While many who have read some of the Old Testament stories and then some in the New Testament, it has been said by many, if not by all persons who begin reading the Bible that it appears as though the Mean, Angry God of the Old Testament is completely different from the Patient, Loving God of the New Testament. So then, the reason we are going back to the Old Testament is to find out why God seemed to have a real problem with sin back then and why today all is well, now that Jesus has died for our sins and why it seems to come to a conclusion of BELIEVING OVER REPENTING. Before anyone thinks I'M saying there were two different Gods, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament, I'd like to mention that God "is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Malachai 3:6 says, "'For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob", and Revelation 1:8 says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Now, let us go to the first story in the Bible, in the book of Genesis, it is the story of creation where we find the first reference to the Godhead, when God said, "Let us make man in our own image..." and we find out throughout Scripture that God is one God in three persons, that is, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as I John 5:7 says, "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word (Christ), and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." After the narrative of God's creation of all things (including man), is the story of Adam and Eve and their sin against God in the Garden of Eden. God has MERCY on Adam and Eve by first of all not obliterating them right there on the spot, but also He makes them clothes to wear. Right after that is the story of Cain's sin in killing his brother Abel. But God has MERCY on Cain by putting a mark on him so as to discourage others from killing him as he did his brother. Eventually, while still in the book of Genesis, God decides to wipe out all of mankind, with a flood, because of their wickedness, but He has MERCY on Noah and His family and has Noah build an ark to escape the coming calamity. Many, many other examples are found in the Old Testament of God's mercy upon mankind. God called Abram (later named Abraham) out of the land of the Chaldeans, where they knew not God, and to bless him bountifully and to make a covenant with him (Genesis 12:1-3), God spared Lot and his daughters from the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19:19-22), Jacob escaped the service to Laban (Genesis 32:10), Joseph was lifted out of the pit and taken to Egypt to eventually spare his family from the famine (Genesis 37-47), Moses was sent to Egypt to deliver Israel out of bondage (Exodus), God allowed Moses to intercede for the people of Israel after they had before, swore to a blood oath to the Lord, but then had made a golden calf to worship. Later, with Moses, God fully declared His great mercies before Moses by proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

The examples of God's mercies continue throughout the many other stories in the Old Testament. Once again it may seem as though I were making a case for just BELIEVING OVER REPENTING since we can see from the examples in God's Word of His great mercies toward His people.

Let's look at what the author of Hebrews says about the many people that they used as examples of persons of faith. Faith after all is believing in something, right? BELIEVING OVER REPENTING? We shall see. You can't have faith in being healed if you don't believe that you can be healed, correct? And you can't heal yourself apart from the sovereignty of God. In other words, you cannot be healed without God allowing it. In Hebrews chapter 11, the author lists many of the persons of faith that believed in God. With each of the examples

given in Hebrews 11, each of those persons had to, as we say, "step out in that faith". Abraham had to move from where he lived, he had to offer his son Isaac up as a sacrifice, Isaac had to speak a blessing over Jacob (and Esau by the way), Jacob blessed each of his sons, then there's Joseph, and Moses, etc. etc. Then we arrive at Chapter 12 that starts off, "Therefore,". That's where the writer is summing things up. He says, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

So what exactly are we believing in when we are told to just "believe on the Lord Jesus"? God has always said and still says to us today to "be holy as I am holy" (I Peter 1:16). Yet we know that our righteousness will never be right on our own. That's where all of those examples of faith come in to the whole message. They stepped out in faith believing God would do what He says He will do. God says that He alone is our sanctification (setting us apart in His holiness) but that we must step out in His promise in that by pursuing His holiness, by our best efforts, to be holy as He is holy. And at a given moment, God WILL sanctify you in Christ Jesus and "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is". So, getting to the BELIEVING vs. REPENTING. While the book of John may not mention the word repent, what he was saying was BELIEVING IS REPENTING. In John 15, Jesus said, " If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love", "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit", "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you", "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you", "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you", and He sums it up in verses 16-17 saying, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another."

So then, the message that God loves you and wants to bless you is only a part of it. He wants us all to abide in His Righteousness, He does want to bless you-to bear much fruit and to be a blessing to others and to know that one day, one glorious day, when we see our Precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we will be like Him and will abide in Him for eternity. AMEN.

New Testament locations with the word "repent":

Matthew 3:2

Matthew 4:17

Mark 1:15

Mark 6:12

Luke 13:3

Luke 16:30

Luke 17:3

Luke 17:4

Acts 2:38

Acts 3:19

Acts 8:22

Acts 17:30

Acts 26:20

II Coritnians 7:8

Hebrews 7:21

Revelation 2:5

Revelation 2:5

Revelation 2:16

Revelation 2:21

Revelation 2:22

Revelation 3:3

Revelation 3:19