



The Third of Three Required Statements

Again we go back to our question posed by God outside the gates of heaven. "Why should I let you in?" There are three required statements. The first statement: **We must be able to tell God that we are sinners deserving eternal punishment.** The second statement: **We must be able to tell God that we believe Jesus Christ paid our penalty by His death on the cross.**

Many people would suppose that to embrace the beliefs that one is a sinner deserving punishment and that Christ's death on the cross is the only payment for man's sin is sufficient to qualify one for entrance into heaven. But this is not what Jesus taught nor is it the teaching of the Bible at large. There is one final statement that needs to be added as one stands outside the gates of heaven.

The third statement: **We must be able to tell God that we are willing to surrender our lives to Christ by receiving Him as Lord and Savior.**

Faith, the Means of Accessing God's Gift

The Bible tells us that God's gift of forgiveness and eternal life is received through faith and repentance (Mark 1:15-15). A good definition of faith is, "trusting in Christ alone for one's salvation." Let's use an illustration to clarify this thing called faith.

Suppose that you and two others were to die at



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the same time and find yourselves outside the gates of heaven in the presence of God. God first turns to one of the others and asks, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" He answers, "Well, I've lived a good, moral, and religious life." God would then say to him, "Depart from Me. You cannot enter My heaven because you have both feet planted on the foundation of your own efforts to save you and that's not good enough."

Next, God turns to the other person and says, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" And the person replies, "Well I've believed in Christ and I've lived a good, moral, and religious life." God would then say to him, "Depart from Me. You cannot enter My heaven because you have one foot standing on Christ and one foot standing on your own efforts to save yourself, and that's not acceptable."

Then last of all, God turns to you and says, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" You reply, "There is nothing I have done or can do to earn Your heaven; but simply because of what Jesus Christ did for me on the cross—and for that reason alone—I have the promise of eternal life." God would then say to you, "You may enter My heaven because you have both feet planted on Christ the Solid Rock, and that's the only firm foundation." Faith is required to enable one to have access to the free gift of salvation.

Repentance, an Integral Part of True Faith

It is important to understand that faith cannot stand alone without repentance. They are inseparable—like



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two sides of a coin. Repentance is simply turning from your sin with a willingness to change. The key is willingness. This doesn't mean one has to immediately stop every sin he's been committing before becoming a Christian. But it does mean that he is willing, with God's power, to change.

The Results of a Changed Life

The moment a person receives this gift, through faith and repentance, God supernaturally indwells his heart giving him a changed life. The Bible says that "But to all who received Him, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12 TLB). Though hard to understand, it is true that God sends His Spirit to live in our lives to enable us to change.

One further illustration will be helpful. Let's say you were to leave your body and step into someone else's body. What would happen to that person? They would take on your characteristics, and though they would retain most of their own characteristics, they would nevertheless be a different person. In a similar way this is what happens when you become a Christian. But instead of a human spirit entering your life, God's Holy Spirit indwells you. As a result, you take on many of the characteristics of God. Human effort is not enough to change us or enable us to live differently. God gives us both the desire and the power to be different because His Spirit lives within us.

Remember, God cannot fellowship with a sinner because of his unrighteousness. But after a person receives Christ, God sees that same person as covered in the righteousness of Christ. As a forgiven and righteous person he can now have fellowship with God.



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The Bible says it like this, "For God took the sinless Christ and poured into him our sins. Then, in exchange, he poured God's goodness into us!" (2 Cor 5:21 TLB). And in 1 Peter "He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when he died on the cross so that we can be finished with sin and live a good life from now on. For his wounds have healed ours!" (1 Peter 2:24 TLB).

What is so exciting is that this new life is described by Jesus as an abundant life (John 10:10)—that is, one which is full of meaning and purpose.

Can you tell God you are willing to surrender your life to Christ by receiving Him as your Lord and Savior?

Bringing Closure To This Most Important Issue

This faith and repentance can be expressed at any time by inviting Christ into your life. Revelation says, "Look! I have been standing at the door, and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears Me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with Me." (Revelation 3:20 TLB). You can express your willingness to open the door of your life by praying like this:

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner who deserves eternal punishment. I do believe You paid my penalty by Your death on the cross. So right now I invite you to be my Savior and Lord and to take residence in my life. Thank you for hearing my prayer and indwelling my life. Amen!



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Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? Would you like to pray now and invite Christ into your life?

If so, sincerely offer this prayer to God and see if God indwells you with the result that you experience a changed life.

Complete reading the Gospel of John using the questions as before.