

²²But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. ... ²⁷You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

MATTHEW 5:21-22A, 27-28 NET

Epilogue: Living ‘in’ Jesus Christ

Paul often speaks of believers being or acting “in” Christ. This refers to their close relationship and association with Jesus Christ, in which they are even identified with him. (See also the introductory comment under *II. Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ*, p. 134).

Believers are to live their lives in accordance with this relationship. As such, in addition to being mindful of the relationship, believers should: be dependent on Jesus Christ in whom they subsist; and act in a way consistent with Jesus Christ and his teachings.

Live “in” Jesus Christ by faith

[PAUL, TO THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS:] For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your morale and *the firmness of your faith in Christ*. ⁶Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, *continue to live your lives in him*, ⁷*rooted and built up in him and firm in your faith* just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. COLOSSIANS 2:5-7 NET

Paul appears to associate having a firm faith in Christ (vv. 5, 7) with living in Christ (v. 6) and being “rooted and built up in him” (v. 7).

Live “in” Jesus Christ by holding to his teachings

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *If you remain in me and my words remain in you*, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. ... ¹⁰*If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love*, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. JOHN 15:7, 10 NET

One remains in Jesus Christ (v. 7) and similarly in his love (v. 10), by holding to his words (v. 7) and so his commands (v. 10).

CHAPTER 21

Being Right with God

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I. Getting Right with God

See also: *God's people are baptized in the "name" of Jesus Christ*, p. 242

There are two prominent themes in the NT regarding how to get "right with God". These are repentance and belief in Jesus Christ.

Bear in mind that in using the expression "right with God", this chapter largely has in view being deemed righteous in God's eyes, which involves the forgiveness of one's sins. As such, it also means that we are at peace with God.

God's Invitation

God invites all people to come to him and be saved

[GOD:] *Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!* For I am God, and there is no other. [ISAIAH 45:22](#) ESV

God wants us to earnestly seek him

[PAUL, PREACHING TO THE ATHENIANS:] God began by making one person, and from him came all the different people who live everywhere in the world. God decided exactly when and where they must live. ²⁷*God wanted them to look for him and perhaps search all around for him and find him*, though he is not far from any of us: ... [ACTS 17:26-27](#) NCV™

We must believe in God and what he says

Now *without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him*. [HEBREWS 11:6](#) NET

[JESUS:] I tell you the solemn truth, *the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me* has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has crossed over from death to life. [JOHN 5:24](#) NET

Jesus' words were from God, who sent him. It is critical that we believe God's words.

He [God] will reward each one according to his works: ⁷eternal life to those who by perseverance in good works seek glory and honor and immortality, ... [ROMANS 2:6-7](#) NET

But our deeds do not earn salvation, for it is by grace

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹it is not from works, so that no one can boast.* [EPHESIANS 2:8-9](#) NET

Good deeds are an effect rather than a cause of salvation.

Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit

We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] In the past, the law held us like prisoners, but our old selves died, and *we were made free from the law. So now we serve God in a new way with the Spirit, and not in the old way with written rules.* [ROMANS 7:6](#) NCV™

Through what Christ accomplished, God's people have been freed from the Mosaic Law as the means of being right with him. We are instead to live by his Spirit. Living by the Holy Spirit involves: being alert and responsive to the Spirit's guidance; and relying on the Spirit's power, to help and change us. Along with this, our minds should be focused on things of the Spirit (cf. Romans 8:5 below).

Instead of living by the sinful nature, live by the Holy Spirit

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] He [God] condemned sin in the flesh ⁴so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who *do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but *those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* [ROMANS 8:3B-5](#) ISV

Here the term "flesh" denotes our sinful nature.

Inner righteousness is needed, not just compliance with rules

[JESUS:] *"You have heard that it was said to an older generation, 'Do not murder,' and 'whoever murders will be subjected to judgment.'*

II. Staying Right with God

See also: *By faith we stand firm*, p. 186

Having been made right with God, it is critical that we live in accordance with this standing, so as to stay right with God. The following topics deal with some key aspects involved in this, namely: obedience; good deeds; living by the Holy Spirit; and living “in” Jesus Christ.

The Need to Obey God

We need to obey God as well as believe

And by the command of the eternal God it [the gospel] is made known to all nations *that they might believe and obey*. [ROMANS 16:26B](#) NCV™

Obedience is critical for holiness and eternal life

[PAUL, SPEAKING TO BELIEVERS OF BEING SLAVES IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD:] Now you have been freed from sin and have *become God’s slaves*. *This results in a holy life and, finally, in everlasting life*. [ROMANS 6:22](#) GW

After he [Christ] had finished his work, he became the source of *eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him*. [HEBREWS 5:9](#) GW

The Need for Good Deeds

True faith involves good deeds

Just as a person’s body that does not have a spirit is dead, so faith that does nothing is dead! [JAMES 2:26](#) NCV™

Good deeds accompany salvation

[THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] Even though we speak like this, dear friends, *we are convinced of better things in your case, things that point to salvation*. ¹⁰For God is not so unjust as to forget *your work and the love you have shown him as you have ministered to the saints and continue to minister to them*. [HEBREWS 6:9-10](#) ISV

We need to be open to believing and responding

He [Jesus] called a child, had him stand among them, ³and said [to his disciples], “I tell you the truth, *unless you turn around and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven!* ⁴*Whoever then humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*. [MATTHEW 18:2-4](#) NET

Here Jesus refers to the humility, openness and receptiveness of little children. These characteristics are required to believe and respond to Jesus’ message – and so enter God’s kingdom.

Repentance

The words in the Bible that are translated as “repent” speak of changing one’s mind, regret and consequently turning around. When people are called to repent, they are called to change their mindset and turn away from sin to God.

We must repent

Therefore, although God has overlooked such times of ignorance, *he now commands all people everywhere to repent, ...* [ACTS 17:30](#) NET

Confess your sins . . .

But if *we confess our sins*, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. [1 JOHN 1:9](#) NET

. . . Turn from sin and do what is right

Turn away from evil and do what is right! [PSALMS 34:14A](#) NET

Turn to God in repentance

[PAUL:] I testified to both Jews and Greeks about *repentance toward God* and faith toward our Lord Jesus. [ACTS 20:21](#) ISV

Repentance is required for the forgiveness of sins

Therefore *repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out, ...* [ACTS 3:19](#) NET

Belief in Jesus Christ

Believe in Jesus Christ

Jesus replied, “This is the deed God requires – to *believe in the one whom he sent.*” [JOHN 6:29](#) NET

Believing in Jesus involves believing what the Bible says about: who he is; his teaching and deeds; and his death and resurrection – including their significance. Key matters concerning who he is and the significance of his death and resurrection are mentioned below. Regarding the latter, primarily we are to believe that as a result of his death and resurrection, Jesus provides forgiveness of sins (and consequently righteousness, leading to eternal life). As such we are to trust in him for the forgiveness of our own sins.

Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

[MARTHA, TO JESUS:] Martha said to him, “Yes, Lord, *I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who was expected to come into the world.*” [JOHN 11:27B](#) GW

“Christ” and “Messiah” are Greek and Hebrew terms respectively, meaning the “anointed” or the “Anointed One”. The OT tells of a coming anointed one of God, and on occasions speaks of him as God’s Son (cf. 2Sam 7:11b-14a; Ps 2:6-7; Ps 89:27).

Belief in Jesus Christ brings forgiveness of sins

About him [Jesus] all the prophets testify, that *everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.* [ACTS 10:43](#) NET

Belief in Jesus Christ makes one righteous before God

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— *the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.* [ROMANS 3:21-22A](#) ESV

Belief in Jesus Christ brings eternal life

For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that *everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.* [JOHN 3:16](#) NET

Reasons for Assurance

The verses in this section give reasons for assurance of things such as being saved and being in a close relationship with God – and consequently give assurance of being made right with God.

Having the Holy Spirit

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but *you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.”* ¹⁶*The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God’s children.* [ROMANS 8:15-16](#) NET

Note that we can be confident that God has given the Holy Spirit to us through evidence such as: indications of the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit in our lives (cf. Galatians 5:22); having a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit (some of which are more obvious than others); and recognition of the Holy Spirit’s help, such as his empowerment or guidance. Moreover, we can sense or have an inner awareness of God, which is constant evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Obedience to God

We can be sure that we know God if we obey his commands. [1 JOHN 2:3](#) NCV™

Love for other Christians

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] *We know that we have left death and come over into life; we know it because we love our brothers and sisters.* [1 JOHN 3:14](#) GNT

Further reasons

But if we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. [1 JOHN 1:9](#) NET

[JESUS:] Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me, and *the one who comes to me I will never send away.* [JOHN 6:37](#) NET

Jesus assures us that he will not reject anyone who comes to him.

Pray for persecuted Christians