

How to be Ready if Jesus Returned Tonight

The Bible tells us there is a wonderful place where God and the holy angels live, called Heaven. It tells us that place is unspeakably delightful, and that Jesus is now preparing mansions there for us. And soon he will come again, and take those who are ready to be with Him!

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”
(John 14:1–3 NKJV)

But the big question is, how can we know we would be ready if Jesus returned tonight? To be ready, you need to be what the Bible calls converted.

“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted... you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 18:3 NKJV)

Sometimes the Bible refers to this as being “born again”

“Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.””
(John 3:3 NKJV)

What does it mean to be converted, or born again? It means a change of heart, so that your motives are changed, your thoughts are changed, your life is changed from one that loves everything God is not, to one that loves everything that God is! This is all done by Jesus, through Jesus, with Jesus, for the asking!

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:8–10 NIV11-GK)

Your righteousness cannot save you, only the righteousness of Jesus working for you, in you, and through you is efficacious for your salvation.

Jesus gives heaven to those who would truly enjoy it. If they would truly be happy there, they will be there. But the problem is that we often find ourselves loving so many things that heaven is not. And the kind of a person who loves the things that God is not, could not appreciate or be happy in a pure and holy place where nothing sinful or harmful that they like, can be found! So God has to help get you to the place where you don’t even want those harmful things anymore, so that you are capable of enjoying heaven when He comes! That’s what conversion or being born again is all about. It gives you your title to heaven, and begins the process of gaining a fitness for it which continues for the rest of your life!

So... how do we get converted? There are two steps to get this change of heart: **repentance and faith**. Paul calls these the “foundation” of Christian teaching.

“...laying again a foundation of **repentance** from dead works and of **faith** toward God” (Heb 6:1 NAS95)

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance** toward God, and **faith** toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:21 KJV)

FIRST STEP IN CONVERSION: REPENTANCE

God gives repentance. (Acts 5:31). We must ask for it.

“Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

(Acts 5:31 NKJV)

Repentance involves sorrow and abhorring of our sin and leads us to turn away from it.

“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:6 KJV)

“No man repented of his wickedness, Saying, ‘What have I done?’” (Jer 8:6 NAS95)

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.” (Ezek 14:6 KJV)

“Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.” (Ezek 18:30 KJV)

Confession also accompanies true repentance: confession of our sin to God (acknowledging our guilt), and confession and restitution to any person we have hurt.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9 KJV)

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (James 5:16 KJV)

Now maybe you really like your sins. Maybe you like the forbidden pleasures that are destroying you, but seem pleasant for a season. How do you get to even want to repent?

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”
(Romans 2:4 NKJV)

SECOND STEP IN CONVERSION: FAITH

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”
(Hebrews 11:6 NKJV)

God gives faith. (Rom 12:3). We must ask for it.

“God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”
(Romans 12:3 NKJV)

What is faith? We will compare scripture with scripture to find out! (“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little”
Isaiah 28:10, and “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” 1 Corinthians 2:13)

“**[Abraham] believed** the LORD, and he **counted** it to him **as righteousness.**”
(Genesis 15:6 ESV)

“**...faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.**”
(Romans 4:9 ESV)

We compare the preceding verses and see that “faith” and “belief” are used interchangeably. They mean the same thing. Believing God’s promises is faith. (In fact, both the word faith, in Hab 2:4, and belief, in Gen 15:6, come from the very same root word).

Yet there is another aspect to faith.

“...the righteous shall **live by his faith.**”
(Habakkuk 2:4 ESV)

“Man shall ... **live... by every word that comes from the mouth of God.**”
(Matthew 4:4 ESV)

Comparing the preceding verses, we see that “living by faith” is used interchangeably with “living by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

So then faith is believing and living the promises of God. It is walking with God! It is living by every word that proceeds from His mouth.

“He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, [repentance is doing justice and kindness] And to walk humbly with your God [this is faith]?” (Mic 6:8 NAS95)

So what God requires of us is simple: (1) Repent of our sins and (2) walk with Him (which is to have faith - believing and living the word of God).

Heroes of Heb 11

“By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”
(Hebrews 11:7 ESV)

God told Noah that a flood was coming. Noah had never seen rain. But he had a promise and believed what God said! God empowered him to act upon what he had been shown, in building a giant boat. Noah believed and lived the promise without seeing its fulfillment immediately. By the way, Bible also says that Noah walked with God (Gen 6:9). A person who walks with God is a faith filled person.

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”
(Hebrews 11:8 ESV)

God told Abraham to go to a place which he would show him. Did Abraham see that place? No. But he believed God, even though he didn't see what God had promised. And God empowered him to act on the belief and he went out to a place he knew not where. If he hadn't acted on the promise, would he have really had faith? No. That's why James tells us that by works is faith made perfect.

“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”
(Hebrews 11:24–25 ESV)

God told Moses that He wanted to use him to deliver Israel from Egypt. Did Moses want to do it? No. Did it look impossible for the promise to be fulfilled? Yes. Yet God empowered Moses to believe and act on the promise anyway, regardless of how he felt!

How does this apply to me? It means that living by faith is to choose to believe what God says even when my experience, my observations, my emotions, and my circumstances point otherwise.

My friend Sean Nebblet, in his book about faith, put it this way: My experience says: I'm never going to have victory. I never have. My life is a constant cycle of defeat. You don't know my story. I've tried, and I've still failed more times than I've tried. Clearly, I'll always fail.

But God's faith in me says: Appearances mean nothing. Promises mean everything. I am a new creature in Christ Jesus. And yes, I know I claimed that yesterday. But I shall claim it again today! I choose to believe that the Prey of

the terrible shall be delivered, and the captives of the mighty will be taken from him (Is 49:25). I choose to believe when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. (Is 59:19) I choose to believe that though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, Ps 37:24. I choose to believe that God says I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness (Is 41:10) I choose to believe John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I choose to believe because my feelings mean absolutely nothing, my past experience means absolutely nothing compared to the promises of God which mean everything. I will choose to walk with God today, which is to exercise faith, and as long as I walk with God, I am invincible because God is my shield. And when I am tempted, I will immediately go to God in prayer and pray until I have the victory, because I believe the promise "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 15:57 KJV) So I praise God for victory before I feel victory, because victory is not a feeling, it is a promise of God which has become fact by my accepting it, and will stay fact as long as I walk with God moment by moment!

Read the prayer of Jesus as he speaks of His disciples in John 17 "they are not of the world, even as I am not", "They have kept thy word" - these are the disciples who were just arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus was speaking by faith, not according to what he recently saw them doing. He was magnifying the good, and those words of faith fostered faith, and produced faith in his disciples!

This is why it is important for us to know our Bibles. If we don't know the promises, then what is there to have faith in? How can I have faith if I don't know the scriptures and cannot claim the promises of God?

Moreover, the act of claiming a promise of God, is an act of prayer. In this way, prayer and faith are inseparable. Sometimes when people pray they simply complain to God about their problems, magnifying and focusing on their sins. Such prayers magnify the problem instead of magnifying the solution! One of my favorite solution-filled ways to pray is to open the Bible and simply pray the promises of scripture! Try opening to Psalm 139 sometime, and praying that chapter. You will find it a powerful exercise for your faith!

Friend, would you like to begin to walk with God today? Have you repented of your sins today? Have you decided to allow Christ to help you believe and live his promises? Then you are ready if Jesus came tonight.

And to you, the pitying Saviour's answer is, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." You can never perish while you do this—never!