

Is Jesus' Love Unconditional?

Many believe that Jesus' message is one of unconditional acceptance for people. This is not true. Jesus was actually asked in the gospels if there would be few saved. His shocking answer is “*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*” (Luke 13:24) Jesus Christ, as He is revealed in the Bible, is indeed patient with mankind to a considerable extent because of His love and desire to save us- however that patience is shown to us with His intent for us and His command for us to turn from going our own way in to instead walk in His truth. Thus He told a woman caught in adultery “*Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*” (John 8:11b) His desire to show her mercy allowed her a great opportunity to forsake her sin and be forgiven. Yet she, like all of us, needed to respond rightly to the light in the opportunity given her by God's patience in order to ultimately be saved from the wrath of God.

Jesus said “*They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*” (Mark 2:17) Though we have all sinned, we cannot remain sinners in the sense Jesus and others in the Bible used the word- referring to a sinner as one who is unrepentant with a disobedient attitude towards God in the present. Later in the New Testament we are along the same lines told “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.*” (Romans 6:1-2a) And the unrepentant are thus warned “*Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance (restraint) and long-suffering (patience); not knowing that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*” (Romans 2:4-5)

In calling people to repentance Jesus affirmed Old Testament Scriptures calling likewise such as “*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*” (Isaiah 55:6-7) Jesus thus in His mercy calls us to fear God and prepare to meet Him, even saying at another time “*And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he has killed has power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear him.*” (Luke 12:4-5)

Likewise Jesus never denied the Old Testament law's diagnosis of sin. He affirmed it and even showed the meaning of God's commandments in a much deeper way that deals with the root of sin in the heart than those in His time had wrongly applied them. He showed that people will be judged not only for murder, but for holding the seeds of murder in things such as anger, holding grudges, casting insults, and spite (Matthew 5:21-22). He said that it's not enough just to not commit the physical act of adultery but that even looking with lust after someone involves committing adultery at heart (Matthew 5:27-28). He said that it is impossible to serve God and money at the same time (Matthew 6:24), as well as giving many other examples of the righteousness of God's law which we must be subject to in order to enter God's kingdom. He taught that God made marriage to be between one male and one female, as well as forbidding divorce and remarriage, saying that those who divorce and remarry on any other ground except their spouses' unfaithfulness commit adultery (see Matthew 19:3-9). He called those who lay up treasure for themselves and are not rich towards God “*fools*” (Luke 12:21) and He called this world “*adulterous and sinful*” because of its unfaithfulness to God and rejection of His commandments, even saying that when He comes back He will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of Him and His words in this adulterous and sinful generation (Mark 8:38). He spoke of the heart of man as the source of the corruption of the world and gave examples of deeds which are the fruit of a corrupt heart. “*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications (sex outside of marriage, pornography, and other sexual practices the Bible forbids), murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness (harmfulness), deceit, lasciviousness (expressing lust or provoking lust), an evil eye (envy), blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*” (Mark 7:21-23)

He spoke too about the eternal fire of hell and illustrated the need to be radical in forsaking our sin from the heart, whatever the earthly consequence of doing so, in order to not go there. “*And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter lame into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee*

to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:43-48) Jesus also spoke of Himself as the ultimate judge of all mankind who will judge all based on our response to the truth revealed in Him. *“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* (Matthew 13:41-43)

The only reason we even have an opportunity to repent at all and enter Jesus' kingdom is because Jesus Himself, the King and Judge of everyone, has in His love gave Himself for us and suffered to make an atonement for the sin of the world (the sin against HIM) by His death on the cross; and has rose again so those who come to God on His terms can find mercy and be saved from sin's power by Him. Without His pouring out His soul and suffering on the cross to make an atonement for our sins there would not be the potential for anyone to be saved at all! He didn't suffer and die willingly for something which could have been done another way. We have mercifully been granted a chance, no matter how far we have gone into sin, to partake of His salvation by calling on Him and confessing Him as Lord and Savior in truth, turning from the sin He died to save us from in order to hear and keep His Word (i.e. walk in the light) until the end.

We can't make up our own way to save ourselves on our own terms. That won't work. *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”* (Proverbs 14:12) It's not worth holding on to careless carnal ease, sinful pleasures, and/or man-made ideas/religion that oppose Jesus Christ's Word and claims, and which cannot lead to the true cleansing and deliverance from serving sin that is in Him. *“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Matthew 16:26) This world is corrupt, as it generally considers many things that God condemns acceptable, normal, and even healthy; as well as exalting people who commit such things, and who are often even open about that and downright proud of it! But you can't be a friend of the world without being an enemy of God. *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”* (James 4:4)

You can't be a true Christian and be right with the Lord while living for self. You can't be a true Christian and be right with the Lord while doing things God condemns and/or willfully thinking about things and/or taking pleasure in things that God condemns. Jesus Christ must be your Lord whom you are genuinely seeking to follow and seeking to save you from your sins without any self-imposed conditions, coming to His Word (the Bible) continually to receive instruction and be changed, regarding nothing and/or no one as more important as understanding and doing His will, and thus living a life that aligns with His Word, trusting in His promises and seeking to be ready to meet Him without any stain when He comes back or when you go to Him at death. *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 6:46) *“He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me. He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.”* (Matthew 10:37-39) *“And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.”* (Luke 8:21) *“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad.”* (Matthew 12:30) *“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”* (2 Peter 3:8-14)

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6) *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness”* (1 Peter 2:24a) *“Who (Jesus) gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us*

from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” (Galatians 1:4) “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19) “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Revelation 14:6-7) “For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent him. Truly, truly, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:22-24)