

# You Don't Have To Believe In God To Go To Heaven

Amazing sentiment, is it not? In comments that will enhance his unbiblical reputation among Christians, Pope Francis wrote a long, open letter last month to the founder of *La Repubblica* newspaper, Eugenio Scalfari, stating that non-believers would be forgiven by God if they followed their consciences.

Responding to a list of questions published in the paper by Mr Scalfari, who is not a Roman Catholic, Francis wrote: "You ask me if the God of the Christians forgives those who don't believe and who don't seek the faith. I start by saying – and this is the fundamental thing – that God's mercy has no limits if you go to him with a sincere and contrite heart. The issue for those who do not believe in God is to obey their conscience ... Sin, even for those who have no faith, exists when people disobey their conscience."

Robert Mickens, the Vatican correspondent for the Catholic journal *The Tablet*, said the pontiff's comments were further evidence of his attempts to distance himself from the Catholic Church's stale image, reinforced by his extremely conservative predecessor Benedict XVI. "Francis is a still a conservative," said Mr Mickens. "But what this is all about is him seeking to have a more meaningful dialogue with the world." In a welcoming response to the letter, Mr Scalfari said the Pope's comments were "further evidence of his ability and desire to overcome barriers in dialogue with all."

While Pope Francis can express his opinion, the Bible, that he supposedly upholds, says, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is indispensable to obedience to God and going to heaven.

The Bible commends a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18; 51:17; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2), but in the sense of sorrow for sin, not as the basis for justification from sin. The scriptures say repentance and baptism are necessary (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Furthermore, the conscience is not sufficient to defining a relationship with God. Paul said, "*And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day*" (Acts 23:1). He had a "good conscience" even though he wrote, "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*" (1 Timothy 1:15). Man's conscience is only as good as mind has been instructed. Speaking of depending on one's own heart, the Proverb writer

said, *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* and *"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered"* (Proverbs 16:25; 28:26). If man could come to God with a sincere heart, objective truth would mean nothing.

Many have left Catholicism because of statements like these. They see the need for belief in God and obedience to Christ, and they take a stand for it!

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