

What is Real Repentance?

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My wife reminded me the other day that it's been seven years since I retired. I can still remember some things whenever I actually had to work for a living. And I know I've mentioned this before. Most people know that I worked as an instructor. As an instructor, whenever we had a classroom session with our students, we would have to lay out a set of ground rules. Procedurally, we were required to do that. I worked at a nuclear power plant and retired from there. We made electricity.

But when we laid out these ground rules, we just basically had to at the end when we were using a lot of PowerPoint, we'd run through a very brief PowerPoint so our students would know everything we had to do for the class.

You know if we had a fire alarm, they had to know how to respond. And some of the other ground rules were you had to turn your phone off or turn it on vibrate. A lot of folks had to be able to be contacted by a pager. And then other things ... it was very basic stuff. Some of the other things were no talking whenever we did the exam. So that was some of the ground rules we had.

But in a sense, what I'm getting at in that introduction, it's kind of the same thing whenever we're first called. We have that opportunity in this day and age, but at all times through time, God has ground rules for us. And the main one initially is that we be baptized.

If you would, please turn over to Hebrews 6. I'd like to turn over to Hebrews 6 verse 1. There are some things that we have to do. There are things we have to follow. And it lays out some very basic things here because it says in Hebrews 6:1; and I'm using the New King James:

Hebrews 6:1. *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary [or the basic] principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (NKJV)*

And right there in those basic things it's stating two conditions which God lays down for us whenever we come to the point where we want to be baptized. It's kind of the same thing that Christ said at the start of His ministry. And I'll just read this and you can mark it down for a reference later or you can turn there. It's in Mark 1 verse 14 and 15 because Christ said—the record says:

Mark 1:14. *Now after John was put in prison [Mark records], Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,*

15) and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (NKJV)

Basically, it laid the groundwork for those things that are later mentioned in Hebrews 6. So, right there in Hebrews 6 and in Mark 1, we have the two conditions for baptism. And they are:

Number one, we must repent before we can be baptized. Not the other way around.

You know some folks think and maybe some religions practice this (I'm not sure), but they baptize and then tell people what they need to repent of. And we've seen a little bit of that, but that's not the way it works.

And the second one is we have to believe or have faith in the Gospel, in the truth, and the things that we're hearing.

So I don't have time to focus on all of those things there, but I would like to focus on the repentance part. And my title is in the form of a question.

What is Real Repentance?

Just exactly what is it? We learn about that when we're first called. And basically, here's how the narrative goes for that. We become interested somehow either through—it used to be through a program. It could be either through television, literature and whatever, but at a lot of times (and this is more times than at one point, we were led to believe), but it would be with contact that someone that was a member of the Church of God.

And then we started to see some things. Our thinking began to slowly change and maybe we started studying the Bible. Maybe we never even picked one up before, but we suddenly got interested in those things.

And then we sought out a minister. We'd heard about the Church and we thought "Well, there's got to be a church somewhere." So we contact; maybe we had to write in. Years ago we had to write in. Now maybe we can just look on the internet and find a Church of God close to us and contact the minister that way. And then we started counseling with that minister.

And then maybe after a bit, depending on where we're at, that minister allowed us to start attending church. And, as we attended church, we started learning things and pretty soon the topic of sin came up. We started discussing that—breaking God's law. And we very quickly understood that we needed to obey God.

And we began those changes. We started keeping the Sabbath. Maybe we started tithing. Maybe we started with the holy days. And again, it depends on where we were

at in this whole process. We began to really believe God. Our faith began to grow. And, obviously God was working with us. We have a scripture that says, "God gives us repentance." Well, God leads us to repentance and we were all led to a certain point as we came along in this process.

And then along about that time we saw the need to be baptized. Even if we'd been baptized somewhere else, we realized maybe that wasn't valid. Maybe we needed to be baptized by a real minister. And then we seriously discussed that baptism. We reviewed some of our actions, behaviors, and some of the things maybe we needed to work on.

And then at some point in this process, again as we progressed, we began to make a commitment to God. We had enough understanding at some point we wanted to continue. We wanted to make that commitment.

And then we're told at that point that we needed to count the cost. And we had to count the cost. And we had to kind of count the cost and the minister kind of wanted to know if we were going to solidify that commitment or not, whether this was real or not. And then we were baptized. And that's generally the process most of us went through. If you were a generational Christian that might be a little bit different. If you grew up in the Church, you've always obeyed, you've always kept the Holy Days, maybe you tithed off your allowance or something when you were growing up, all of that.

But the point is at some place there we learned about repentance.

And the problem is our understanding may not have gone too much beyond that. We may not have clearly understood that this is a lifelong ongoing process. And I know someone out there is thinking, "Whoa, Jack! Are you trying to tell me that I didn't really repent back then?" Well, we probably did and I'm going to try to elaborate on this as I go through, but remember that phrase "foundation of repentance" that it said there in Hebrews 6:1. And we're going to see if that foundation isn't solid, it becomes a salvational issue. So, repentance becomes very important for us.

The first thing we need to do there is establish some kind of a definition for what the scripture is talking about when it says repentance. And we're going to learn right away that there are some very important distinctions about what real repentance is. There are two words actually in the Greek that we'll look at. And the King James translators either didn't know the difference or they were told not to differentiate between the two. So, what we have in scripture, in the New Testament, we have two different Greek words translated "repent" or "repentance." The important thing for us to realize, even at this early stage in the sermon, is that there are entirely two different meanings.

In Acts 3, we know the context here. Peter healed an invalid and then reminded the listeners that they had killed Christ. But it says in Acts 3:19:

Acts 3:19. *Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, (NKJV)*

And the “repent” here, the Greek is *metanoéo*. If you want to look it up the Strong’s numbers for the Greek words, which is basically an index, it’s G for Greek 3340. We’ll call that number one; we’ll call that the first word for “repent.”

But over in Matthew 27, there’s a different word. Actually, it’s the same Greek word with a different meaning. And over in verse 3 and this is from the King James, in Matthew 27:3, it says:

Matthew 27:3. *Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, (KJV)*

And we know that he threw that down there and went out.

But the Greek here, the Strong’s number is going to be G3338. We’ll call that number two. It’s spelled “m-e-t-a-m-e-l-l-o-m-a-l.” But here that word that Judas used just means *remorse or regret*. It’s entirely different from the other word. He was remorseful over what he had done. Some modern translations actually do translate that as “remorse” now because they see the difference in the two words.

But that use of the word for “repent” has to do with the emotional aspect of feeling sorry for something. That’s all it really means. It’s not repentance towards God and no salvation is possible as we go along here. So right away we see there’s a very distinct difference between these two words. And the previous term means more than that. The number one we looked at (the 3340) is actually a deep down change of heart. It’s what God really wants to see in us. It’s actually real repentance. So, we have these two meanings. The number one is a change of heart and the number two is just an emotional regret or remorse. What it’s really addressing there are two mental responses to something.

And I’ll leave all the verbs, the adverbs, and all the other word construction to the grammarians. I won’t try to get into that, but so that you don’t have to take my word for it I’m going to do a loose quote from Zodhiates. I call it a “loose quote” because I’m going to leave some of the technical data out of there. He’s going to contrast the G3338, which is our number two, with our number one, the 3340. He says, “*To regret.*” That’s what that number two means.

... [It] has the meaning of changing one’s mind or purpose after having done something regrettable. Contrasted with [the other one] *metanoéo* (3340), to repent, [This one he’s talking about again; he goes back and forth here] ... expresses the mere desire that what is done may be undone, accompanied with regrets or even remorse, but with no effective change of heart.

So that's the number two. There is no change of heart in that. And he goes on to say:

... it is an ineffective repentance for which the forgiveness of sins is not promised ... repentance [or being sorry] ... on the part of man, means little or nothing more than a selfish dread of the consequence of what one has done, whereas [the other one] means regret and forsaking the evil by a change of heart brought [on] by God's Spirit.

It's interesting what he actually saw there from the Greek. That's the end of the quote. But he actually nails it right there in that last sentence.

And we try to express both meanings with that one English word "repent." Again, it has a tendency to confuse the whole issue and you have to wonder if Satan probably isn't behind that a little bit. He obviously is. But it's important we make that distinction when we see the word and look at it in context, which is what we'll go on to do.

So the first meaning again, *metanoéo*, the 3340, means *change in the mind, heart, thinking*. It's an attitude of wanting to please God, which is what God really wants. And that attitude will eventually lead to salvation. And the other one expresses the emotional aspect on our part and it's that we regret something that we don't want to suffer the consequences for. Not really because what it's done to our relationship to God. So, there's a very distinct difference between the two meanings and that approach will never lead to salvation.

Well, let's look at some applications of this and see if we've gained a little bit here. We immediately come up with a question: Is just keeping God's law real repentance? It becomes a very interesting question. If we go back to that initial pre-baptism when we started keeping the Sabbath, the holy days, tithing, the other things, and we look at that—and we did do some initial repenting there. We changed some things and we did change our mind on some things, but the short answer there is just a change of breaking God's law may not be real repentance. It's only our initial response to things we've learned as we were coming along.

We learned other things. We learned the truth about Christmas, Easter, all of those kinds of things, Halloween. We learned it was all bad and we stopped doing it. And that was good. We needed to do that. And probably one of the first scriptures that we ever heard or learned was 1 John 3:4.

1 John 3:1b. ... *sin is the transgression of the law.* (KJV)

But it doesn't say there "to stop breaking God's law is repentance." It just doesn't say that. I'd like to refer back to Hebrews 6 again and read that same scripture again and look at something else in that short paragraph. Back in Hebrews 6 and verse 1 again, it says—and this is the New King James.

Hebrews 6:1. *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary [the basic] principles of Christ [We read all that.], let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (NKJV)*

And those two words there that are “dead works,” “dead” just means *dead*. And “works” from the Greek is *ergon*. That’s where we get the science of work, labor—ergonomics. But let’s turn over to Galatians 5 because these works are described right there, some of the things we stopped doing whenever we learned we needed to live by God’s word.

Every scripture that I’m going to use here today is very familiar, but in this context it kind of takes on some depth of meaning. Go back in Galatians 5. And we know the whole context there. I’d like to read all that, but we don’t have time to do all that. But Galatians 5, let’s drop down to verse 16 where Paul says—and we know these Galatians were having some issues. They were having some problems among themselves. Galatians 5:16.

Galatians 5:16. *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (NKJV)*

And where does that lust come from? It all goes on in our carnal mind. It starts in the mind. Verse 17:

17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (NKJV)

That ought to remind us of Romans 7 and 8 where Paul mentioned the same thing.

But did you catch that there? There are two opposing forces. And if we put that together with Romans 7, Paul recognized that he had a war going on in his mind and it was actually a battle for control. That’s really what it was.

I heard one time someone use the example that the problem that we have as human beings is we have an “operating system.” They used the computer analogy. We have an operating system and it’s programmed already. It’s programmed with our carnal nature. That’s the “software” that we put into our “human program.” We used to call it the spirit in man. It’s in our intellect, our reasoning, but when we truly repent (that first word again, *metanoéo*, the G3340, that number one), it’s a change that takes place in the mind. It changes from that natural to using God’s holy spirit to re-program with God’s “software.” The thinking changes from our thinking, carnal thinking, to God’s thinking.

The Galatians didn’t understand that, but human nature has never changed. They understood that much about human nature. And, actually, when we first started learning about the truth in ourselves, we began to see (and God was working with us changing our minds), we began to see our human nature and to see it in other people,

unfortunately, but here we are. But all of this, so you know to make that change, that's absolutely impossible for us to do on our own. No amount of law keeping, no amount of dos and don'ts will accomplish that. It just won't do it.

But this is an ongoing process that only starts at initial conversion. Obeying God's law, making those changes, when we start keeping God's law, God's working with us. At that point, hopefully, we've been baptized; we've had hands laid on us, we have God's holy spirit and the "software" begins to change. That's when the process changes. Remember part of Hebrews 6:1 where it said, "Go on to perfection"? We didn't accomplish that at baptism, at that initial repentance—perfection. I'm sorry at that initial point—that foundational element again.

Well, we know that God's going to resurrect our mind. We're going to be given a new spirit body. So, He's interested in our mind, what we're doing with our mind. It's the mind that's going to be given a new spirit body. Let's continue there in Galatians 5 and see a little bit more of this. In Galatians 5 dropping down to verse 18:

Galatians 5:18. *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law [or under the condemnation of the law]. (NKJV)*

Verse 19:

*19) Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,
20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,
21) envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJV)*

Did you notice anything there? Every one of those things starts in the mind. The body doesn't operate separate from the control center, which is our mind.

We can look at one example there of one of those things—adultery. And we can apply these two aspects of repentance that I've introduced here. People can slip up. I've known a lot of people that have ... I've worked with people that have been married five, six times. And it's usually because there's a situation going on; there's another person involved. It becomes a triangle.

But people can be drawn into any kind of an adulterous situation like that and then they come to their senses or they get caught. And they're very remorseful—they say, "Oh man! What have I done? What have I done here?" And they beg the spouse for forgiveness and that usually happens—at least once. And then they do it again in a moment of weakness. They do the same thing again, maybe with the same person, a different person. It doesn't matter, but what kind of repentance was that? Well, that

was the number two. They were sorry about the consequences, but there was no real change of heart or the mind.

We can look at David's example, Psalm 51. Again, very familiar scriptures begin to take on a lot of meaning when we're talking about this topic. We've read that many times and we know what's going on there. Nathan pointed out what he'd done. He'd been caught. And David was crushed. We can see this from the psalm, and I'd like to turn over there, Psalm 51.

But what did David do? Do we recall? I'll tell you what he didn't do. He didn't go to Bathsheba and beg for forgiveness. He didn't do that. Later there is some indication that he comforted her when the child died, the result of their adulterous affair. He didn't go to Uriah's parents and apologize to them for engineering their son's death, or maybe he had brothers or sisters. We don't have that account.

But he went to God and acknowledged his sin. And he knew his sin was against God and he begged God for forgiveness and for a clean heart to renew his thinking. That's where the adultery first took place. He saw her and he wanted her and it was arranged. And he also begged God not to take His holy spirit from him.

But in Psalm 51 verse 16 says:

Psalm 51:16. *For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. (NKJV)*

There was nothing physically he could do to make up. No amount of sacrifices, no amount of law keeping, no amount of doing this or that, but with God's holy spirit, he knew it was beyond any means he could come up with. He had that understanding and that understanding only came through God's spirit. Verse 17 says,

17) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart — these, O God, You will not despise. (NKJV)

He knew where the problem was. It was in his thinking. That was true repentance.

In Galatians 5 dropping down into verse 22, we begin to see God's thinking. Paul is telling the Galatians what it was.

Galatians 5:22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23) gentleness, self-control. (NKJV)*

And these things are all outside the carnal human thinking realm. They're just not there, naturally. Not there. It doesn't mean we're terrible human beings. It's just not there without God's spirit.

23b) ... *Against such there is no law.*

24) *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (NKJV)*

We came up out of that watery baptismal grave. It means we really repented. Not just our sins, but our thinking. Verse 25:

25) *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

26) *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (NKJV)*

And, apparently, that's what they were doing amongst themselves. They were reverting back to their former thinking. They were envious. They were jealous of one another. They were fighting amongst themselves. They were allowing things to come into their minds that Paul said they shouldn't be doing. You know he told them early in the chapter, he said, "Who has deceived you? Your thinking was right for a while but then it changed. Who's gotten to you?"

Back in Psalm 51 it described real repentance, but it didn't use the word. But there is an Old Testament equivalent and it's interesting to pull this into the context. I'll go to my Vines. The Old Testament word for repent is H (Hebrew) 5162. And here's what Vines says in reference to that word and this one's a lot easier. It's "nacham." It's spelled "n-a-c-h-a-m." I'll quote Vines. "*To repent, comfort*" is what nacham means, *to repent*. It's used 40 times and "to comfort" about 65 times in the Old Testament [total]. ... Most uses of the term in the Old Testament are connected with God's repentance.

He briefly mentions Genesis 6:6 where it says, "...it repented the Lord that he had made man..." He was sorry He had done that. "And the Lord repented [NASB, changed his mind] of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" Ex 32:14, KJV.

Vines goes on to say: "Sometimes the Lord "repented" of the discipline He had planned to carry out concerning His people" and he gives some other quotes here Jeremiah 18:8, 18:10.

Jeremiah 18:10. *"If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good..." (KJV)*

In other words, if you look at all those using his quote here, it simply means God changed His mind. That's exactly what the term means in the Old Testament. And if you think of the Old Testament when God changed His mind so many times dealing with the nation of Israel, you know the opportunity to repent, to change was given and addressed to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, it's addressed, because it's spiritual, it's addressed to the individual, each one of us. That's why we have the opportunity for the things we do. In all those things, God wants man to make the right choices.

And he goes on here, the last part of Vines quote.

... but He could not change His attitude toward evil when man continued on the wrong course. As God changed His actions, He always remained faithful to His own righteousness.

It tells us a whole bunch right there. God doesn't change to suit our needs as far as repenting changing our minds does. He wants us to change our thinking to His—again, not the other way around.

But very clearly that Hebrew term means God changed His mind just like “repentance” means to us to change the mind for us. It's a restructuring of the thinking to be more in tune with God's thinking.

God know those that are His. We have scriptures that tell us that. He's not going to resurrect the mind that's not on His wavelength into His kingdom. It simply won't work.

That kind of brings us back to another question, part of our initial repentance. We have to ask ourselves “Have we been faithful to our commitment to God at baptism?” Remember one of the initial counseling questions was “Have we counted the cost of committing the rest of our lives to following Jesus Christ?” And in that first love when we committed, we made that commitment; we readily agreed to that.

And that first love is pretty fragile at that point. That's why Christ said, “If you put a stumbling block or if you offend one of these little ones, just learning these things, just starting to change the thinking, it's not going to be pleasant for you.” But let's revisit that. Let's go over to Luke 14 and revisit that narrative in this whole context here. In Luke 14, dropping down to verse 26, Christ says:

Luke 14:26. *If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. (NKJV)*

And we know that's hate comparatively speaking. But what He's saying there is if we truly want to be His disciple, we have to enter into a lifelong learning process. Your relationship, Christ is saying “Your relationship to me has to become the most important one in your life.” And if we think about that, that's some pretty high-level mind altering. We actually have to reprioritize our relationships. It takes a genuine repentance in order to do that. Verse 27:

27) *And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (NKJV)*

And he gives us a couple of examples.

*28) For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it —
29) lest, after he has laid the foundation, ... (NKJV)*

And, interestingly enough, that's the exact same word used over in Hebrews 6:1. And the point there being: If that commitment, that spiritual foundation isn't bed-rock solid like God's is—God doesn't change.

He doesn't change His thinking and we shouldn't either, once we accept and commit to follow God in everything. Never compromise His thinking, but continuing in verse 29:

*29b) ... and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,
30) saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'
31) Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? (NKJV)*

He's out-numbered, out-maneuvered—everything. Verse 32:

*32) Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.
33) So likewise, ... (NKJV)*

“In exactly the same way,” He's saying.

33b) ... whoever of you does not forsake all that he has ... (NKJV)

And remember the context we're talking about—the relationship with Jesus Christ that we have.

33 continued) ... cannot be My disciple. (NKJV)

You have to think about that for a second because wow! What that really means is if we haven't made the mind switch, we haven't really repented in the pure spiritual sense of the word. And, obviously, we know that God doesn't want us to sever ourselves from our families—unlike some groups kind of demand that folks do—but He's talking about a mindset.

Let's look at the example.... I don't know about you when Worldwide broke up. What happened? We'd served in the Pasco area in Worldwide for twenty-five years and when we left, we didn't have any friends anymore. All of our friends disappeared. When the lies and the heresy came in, you have to ask yourself, who was following these instructions? If we're putting Christ first, it has to be first. First is first all the time. It's never second, last or anything like that. And my point here is not to judge the actions of other brethren—that's Christ's prerogative—but I just want to help us see the point there.

If that relationship, relational structure in our mind, hasn't changed, not undergone that change as Christ describes, putting on Christ above all else, then it's not true repentance. It's just remorse. Maybe we miss the relationships we could have had that we used to have. It doesn't say that. That's not what Christ's telling us to do.

So, I kind of hope this is becoming clear now. And maybe we can begin to see why we have some of the problems we do. It may be because we're not really doing what God wants us to do. We're not really repentant all the time in everything. And we all have to ask ourselves that. Hopefully we ask ourselves that pre-Passover when we do look seriously at ourselves.

And then the question comes up, "So, what kind of repentance is God really looking for in us? What is He really looking for?" People sometimes make the mistake of viewing God's laws and instructions as an end in themselves, but is God just looking for compliance? Let's turn over to Luke 17, if you would, again very, very familiar, but in this context. I'd like to go to Luke 17:10 and read it out of the Amplified because Christ is using an illustration here in Luke 17. It's that of a master and servant relationship. He's telling them, "That's the relationship you have with Me. I'm the Master." Again, it's not the other way around, but in Luke 17:10, again out of the Amplified:

Luke 17:10. *Even so on your part, when you have done everything that was assigned and commanded you, say, We are unworthy servants ... (AMP)*

We don't have any merit.

10b) ... for we have not gone beyond our obligation; we have [merely] done what was our duty to do. (AMP)

You can compare that to Matthew 25. We all know what Matthew 25 is about. The parable of the talents is there too, which is basically an analogy of using God's holy spirit to change our thinking. Not just complying. In Matthew 25 verse 29:

Matt 25:29. *'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have [last part of the parable of the talents], even what he has will be taken away.*

30) And cast the unprofitable servant [who only does the minimum requirement] into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (NKJV)

We know that's just an idiom for the lake of fire.

And I hope we recognize that God's not looking for people who will for all eternity keep the Sabbath and the holy days. Those things only represent steps in God's plan. And, at some point in the future, those steps will be completed. Did you ever think about the fact that Mark 2:27, for a reference scripture, tells us that the Sabbath was made for man, but at some point is there going to be any need for the Sabbath? Yeah, during the

Millennium, but what about after that? All those things will be completed. There won't be any need for the Sabbath. There won't be any need for the holy days because those only describe steps in God's plan.

So, again the question is, "What exactly is God looking for in us who have been called to repent?" And again, God is not primarily looking for people who merely do the things He tells them to do. He's not looking for someone to do all the right things, has all the right actions, all of that. If He were, there wouldn't be any need to go beyond the Pharisees. There were Pharisees then and we have the Pharisees today that think that repentance and obeying God is some kind of a regimen rather than a relationship. And, of course, we have to do the things that are right, the things that God tells us to do. We have to obey God's law, but it's not our actions which God is primarily interested in.

What He wants first and foremost is the change in our mind. He's interested in how we think. God see the heart. Other people even see this. C. S. Lewis in his book Mere Christianity, which I think is a play on words, I'll quote him. He says, "Humans judge one another by action. God judges us by our moral choices." The point being there: If our thinking is right before God, then the right actions, the right conduct will follow. It'll just be an automatic thing.

So by themselves, again, the right actions—keeping the Sabbath, not eating unclean meats, all of that—they have no merit or value if they're not the product of the right way of thinking.

And we also have to realize sometimes we can do right things produced by a wrong way of thinking with the wrong motivation. I've been there. But if we do something right with the wrong attitude or wrong motivation, what's the value there? It's no better to God than outright disobedience.

And this again brings has some impact on another very familiar scripture. Over in Isaiah 66 verses 1 and 2, you probably don't even have to turn there.

Isaiah 66:1. Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build [for] Me? And where is the place of My rest? (NKJV)

All those things are totally outside the physical realm. Verse 2:

2) For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word. (NKJV)

It's abundantly obviously there what God's looking for is a totally submissive frame of mind to all of His laws and instructions—all done from the heart. That's what He wants from us.

And if we look closely at the context in Romans 8, it's talking about the law and not just the physical keeping of it, but the spiritual aspect of a changed mind and repentant heart wanting to apply and keeping God's law. But in Romans 8 drop down to verse 5.

Romans 8:5. *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (NKJV)*

Rick gave a whole sermon on that one verse there here a while back.

6) *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

7) *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. (NKJV)*

It's absolutely impossible to serve two masters. We can't do it. Christ tells us that. Verse 8:

8) *So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (NKJV)*

And flesh here is just a reference to a carnal mindset. And if you put that verse with James 4:4 and this is just a reference scripture because what does it say in James? James 4 verse 4:

James 4:4. *Adulterers and adulteresses! ... (NKJV)*

It covers all humans. There's only male and female.

4b) *... Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (NKJV)*

And what does that really say? If you think like the world, you're the enemy of God. And that's what we're all trying to change in our minds.

Paul's writing to the Romans here. Do you think they had the same problems being influenced by their society that we have today? We'd probably be really shocked if we knew the similarity because all those works of the flesh are still there, still here no matter what form they take. But let's continue in Romans 8 and verse 9.

Romans 8:9. *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. ... (NKJV)*

And that is what enables us to really repent, change our thinking. It's an ongoing process.

9b) ... Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (NKJV)

His thinking is not compatible, you could put there. Verse 10:

10) *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

11) *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [that] dwells in you. (NKJV)*

And that's the power of change, the power to change. Again, it's not possible for us to do that on our own. We can't do that on our own steam. Verse 12:

12) *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh [to live according to that thinking].*

13) *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, ... (NKJV)*

Which, and all those deeds, all those works originate in the mind.

13b) ... you will live.

14) *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, ... (NKJV)*

And that's demonstrated by the changes in our thinking.

14b) ... *the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (NKJV)*

So when we do the right things with the right mind or the right things with the wrong mind, we can't please God unless we have that change of mind. Kind of convoluted there, but I hope you know what I said.

And, again, I'm not implying we could do these things under our own power. If we did that, then we could claim that we're earning our own salvation, but we can't do that. It's absolutely impossible. We used to and there's still, I'll call them "secular churches" out there that claim that's what we always claimed—you could earn your salvation. I don't believe that was ever taught. If we understood it that way, we weren't hearing it right and we certainly weren't following scripture.

Again, our part is we do have to make choices. And it takes just an entirely different mindset. The kind of mindset we need is described over in Romans 12. Romans 12:1 and 2. But let's just review it in this context

Romans 12:1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies ... (NKJV)*

"Along with your mind," we could put there.

1b) ... a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed ... (NKJV)

That word's interesting because we have the G3340, the G3338, the two different types of repentance, the two different Greek words. And then this one [transformed] is G3339. It fits right in there. It's all related to the same process of really repenting, "metamorphose," for the Greek [metamorphoo (met-am-or-fo'-o)], but let's continue verse 2. Well, I'll read the whole verse again without the comment.

2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJV)

So right there we have a definition of a repentant Christian—right there! Someone with a renewed mind. Someone, whose mind has been initially renewed, changed, but it's in a constant state of renewal. Not just keeping God's law. Not keeping it as an end in itself, but it's using God's holy spirit, wanting, desiring to do what God wants us to do—to live by every word of God. It's daily repentance.

And again, we have to make those choices. We can be close to God one day, every day, one day a week, one day a month, one day a year. We still have to make those choices. And it actually matters more to us than it does to God of those choices, if you know what I'm saying there. But He wants to see that change in us. So the choices are very important for us to change that thinking. The choices help us change that thinking or not change that thinking if we make bad choices.

So, a renewed mind, again just from that scripture there, represents a very powerful motivation. It does for us. It has a whole new pattern of thinking if we have that mind. It's a mind that will strive to obey God's law in every aspect of our lives. We all fall short of that. Don't we? But it'll go much further. It will not only ask, "What does God want me to do" but "What would God like me to do?"

Using God's holy spirit will also affect our conscience. If we have God's holy spirit and it's operating on our mind, it's in our thinking process; when we do something wrong, we know we do something wrong. Don't we? We think, "Oh man! Why did I do that! Why did I do that! I need to change that. I need to change the way I thought about that because that led me into that. I've got to repent. I've got to change that thinking."

And we should want that right motivation of the things that we think about and the things that we do. The apostle John explained that over in 1 John 3. 1 John 3 is kind of about our actions from the inside out. John talks a lot about that, but he says that God hears the prayers of those who are motivated by a desire to please him. That's what he says in 1 John 3 verse 20.

1 John 3:20. *For if our heart [our mind, our conscience] condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. (NKJV)*

In other words, He knows what's really motivating us. Verse 21:

21) Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, ... (NKJV)

In other words, "We have a clear conscience."

21) ... we have confidence toward God. (NKJV)

That's the kind of confidence we want. Verse 22:

22) And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments [from the heart] and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (NKJV)

The process is working when we do that. It's not working when we do those things that are pleasing in our sight.

And another thing about a renewed changed mind, it understands that everything God tells us to do is good for us. It's in every part of our lives. Yet, you know I hear people and I'm sorry to say I hear people in church grumbling about the church. Church somehow has become a drudgery. But a renewed mind will strive to please God in any and every way possible. It's a far cry from the mind that says these things. I made a very short list.

The first one is someone will say: "Well, as long as God doesn't specifically forbid me to do something, I don't see why I shouldn't do it."

And the second one is: "What do I have to do in order to be in God's kingdom?" That's a very selfish motivation. And it's kind of an approach that "I can bargain with God. If I do this, this, and this, God has to give me salvation." That's that kind of an approach.

And the third one is. "As long as there's no specific commandment from God against these things, I feel free to dress the way I want, to groom myself the way the world does, and participate in the customs and the traditions of the world around me." Let's all run out and get a tattoo. That kind of thinking is not looking for what God would like from us. It's only interested in knowing "How far can I go without directly transgressing God's instructions, His commandments and laws? How far can I go?" It's a mind that says, "How far can I extend the boundaries?"

And the fourth one is: "As long as it's not one of the unclean foods listed in the Bible, I feel free to eat whatever I like—even those things that are bad for me. It's my business. Right?" Again, that's a pretty selfish motive and a mindset. There are lots of things in

the grocery store we shouldn't be stuffing in our face. It's harmful for us. It's obviously bad for us.

But again, the point is: Outward physical actions, like Sabbath keeping, tithing, not smoking—I know somebody at one time that was baptized and that was the only requirement that they had to stop smoking—none of that requires a renewed mind.

You know there are a lot of people out there that don't smoke. There are a lot of people that keep the Sabbath. There are people that even keep the holy days. And there are people that don't eat unclean food. There are lots of people out there that do that, but they've never had a renewed mind. They're operating with the same mind they had prior to baptism, if they had a baptism and if it was valid.

We tend to be impressed by outward appearances, but God's never fooled, ever—never ever. He looks on the heart which is the whole point again. 1 Samuel 16 (a couple of reference scriptures) 1 Samuel 16:7.

1 Samuel 16:7. *But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart [the mind]." (NKJV)*

In Isaiah 55 verses 8 and 9:

Isaiah 55:8. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord.*

9) *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (NKJV)*

I hope you realize too that I've only scratched the surface of this. You can dig into it much further if you want, but real repenting has to do with the way we change the way we think. It's not only about our actions. It's especially about the way we think.

You know those words we looked at? The one where it was purely a physical remorse, but the other with the more important term for repenting derived from the word for the mind. That's where that Greek word comes from. It's not a word that refers to the actions or behavior; it refers to the mind. And that's the harvest God's looking for. He's looking for a harvest of changed minds—not a harvest of really neat bodies, good physiques, handsome men, beautiful women—he's looking for changed minds.

In our day and age then, what does all of this boil down to? Whenever we truly repent, are baptized, we embark on this life of repenting, changing our thinking from the old carnal way, what's left? What's left for us?

I'll throw in one of my little dumb golf things again, my little analogies. We're all, us golfers and people that are even remotely interested in golf or have ever watched it,

we're all impressed with somebody that can smack a ball and drive it three or four hundred yards. But really good golf instructors—because golf is an 80% mind game. So really good instructors say that the most important distance in golf is that 5½ or 6 inches between your ears—in the thinking.

And that's kind of what's left for us too. Right now we have space to repent. We have this opportunity now to let God and Christ in as much of our thinking as we possibly can. We exercise that free choice.

Final scripture over in Romans 13. And if you really look into the context of Romans 12 and 13, it's largely about thinking, behaving like a true Christian. That's what the context is about there. But in Romans 13 verses 11 through 14, again, New King James.

Romans 13:11. *And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.*

12) The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, ... (NKJV)

There is a lot of darkness in thinking in the world.

12b) ...and let us put on the armor of light.

13) Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust [what the mind thinks], not in strife and envy.

14) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (NKJV)

Brethren, let's keep in mind what real repentance is and let's apply it in our daily lives and truly put on Jesus Christ and truly repent.