

What is Repentance?

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Okay, brethren. I would ask you to open your Bibles to Jeremiah 8. Brethren, when I was first converted, I think many of you know that I was exposed to John MacArthur's book, "The Gospel According to Jesus." MacArthur has a chapter in that book concerning repentance. And I know that MacArthur was confronted by men - women too, undoubtedly - who were saying that repentance is only a change of mind, and they were being very specific to say it does not necessarily include a change of life. And it seems like being exposed to that early on, there was a tendency in my own mind to define repentance as not just a change of mind - in fact, not even particularly, or necessarily most importantly a change of mind as much as a change of life; a turning from sin. And oftentimes, where you find the terminology of repentance, you find also the word "turn." And I guess I was uncomfortable. I felt uncomfortable with that definition. James and I were talking at the men's retreat and we were agreeing that at times we have said that. We have defined repentance that way: to turn from sin. Well, for a number of years, I've been looking at passages that deal with repentance. I think it's such an important aspect of salvation that we need to be crystal clear. And I formulated a sermon that I've preached in maybe 8 or 9 other places now, but I've never preached it here. And I think we need to be clear. And I want us to consider some things this morning in hopes that an hour from now perhaps there is greater clarity in the mind concerning what is repentance and how do we define it. Craig was saying that he just saw where one theologian/professor defined repentance as "joy." I don't know where he came up with that. I like the guy who said it, but I don't like that. I don't think that's good. I don't think that's accurate.

Okay, let's think here. John the Baptist. If you just think New Testament, you come into the New Testament. It's interesting to me that very often you get "repent" from those holy men of old that you find in the pages of Scripture. You come to the New Testament. They're preaching. Oftentimes, they don't even use the term "faith" or "believe." They simply said, "Repent!" Isn't it interesting - God commands all men, everywhere, not just to repent and believe - it's like Paul feels like he can actually leave faith out. Not that we would leave faith out; not that he leaves faith out. Obviously somebody came to him one time and said what must a man do to be saved? And he said, "believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and Thou shalt be saved." Paul didn't leave it out, but it is interesting that Paul could actually talk about salvation and he could leave faith out. He could just say, "repent." We come into the Scriptures and what do you have? The New Testament Scriptures - John the Baptist. He said that the Kingdom of God is at hand. And we are to repent. Right after that, Jesus comes on the scene. Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent!" And as you walk through, you go to Mark's Gospel when the twelve are being sent out, and you specifically have this: "The twelve went out and proclaimed that people should repent." You come to the book of Acts. You know what you find there. Peter said - day of Pentecost, "repent!" "Repent and be baptized." Not even "repent and believe." Yes, there are times it says that. Repentance and remission of sins is that which is to be preached starting in Jerusalem, but all around the world. You find after Peter, here comes Paul. He takes precedence among the apostles. How does he talk? "Paul declared first to those in Damascus,

then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God." We don't want to be wrong with this term. We don't want to be wrong about the way that we speak about it.

Here's the thing, I hear people say: I'm trying to repent and God isn't saving me. I hear people say: I'm repenting - but they're indicating some way: God is not responding to me. And I look at that and I'm convinced they don't understand repentance, and the last thing that we want to do is we don't want their misunderstanding to come from the fact that us well-meaning Christians are defining repentance in a wrong manner. What we don't want to do is make repentance into a work - some kind of pre-salvation deal that they have to do to pick up the wreckage in their life in order to make themselves acceptable. And that's the feeling that you get.

A lot of people when they hear "repentance," they're thinking, okay, the well-meaning Christian says it means to turn from sin, and so okay, I'm going to turn from sin. I'm going to stop going to the bar. I'm going to stop picking up the twelve pack after work. I'm going to stop clicking on the pornographic website. And then they look at God and they say: okay, I've done my part. And then nothing's happening. There's silence. Well, the well-meaning Christian - that's what they told me to do: turn from sin. That's what I'm trying to do. And brethren, I'll tell you this, if that's all we do in our definition of repentance, we've come sadly short.

What I want to say is this: The turning from sin to God, it's repent and turn. The turning is that which flows out of the repentance. It's that which is a fruit of it. It isn't that itself. Listen, repentance sounds a whole lot like penance. And there's a reason. If my understanding is right, they're derived from the same root word in the Latin. But the reality is, when the reformers and the Catholics went separate directions, the reformers went with the word "repentance," the Catholic church went with "penance." And the truth is, the one is based on our works and the other one is not. And what we don't want to do is speak about repentance in such a way that we're leading people to think penance. And they sound similar.

So, let's think. Don't be afraid of this. And I think at one time I was. Re-pent. Re. Again. Prefix. -Pent. A pensive person is a thoughtful person. Re-think. That's what the English word means. It means to re-think. It is in the mind. See, repentance does not start with the turn of the actions. It starts with a turn in the mind. It's to re-think. Or you know the Greek word: metanoia. The idea of afterthought. But again, after - re; thought - think. It's basically to change the mind. It's to think again and to think differently when you think again. It's to re-think. And it's to change the mind. That's the idea behind repent. That is the idea. The change of life - yes. It happens. Because if you change your mind - listen, for a person to say, well, it only means to change the mind, not the life - if your life doesn't change, then your mind hasn't changed. Because when the mind changes, everything else follows - if it really changes. If you become really convinced of something, everything else will follow. You will do what you're convinced of. That's the issue. It isn't repentance itself, it's repent and then turn - turn in the mind, and the whole self follows. So, our Lord Jesus Christ said this: "I say to you, unless you repent, you will likewise perish." This is essential. This is life and death. So we do not want to be wrong on this term.

This actually precedes - when you have repentance and faith together, the repentance is always first. Because the repentance is necessary for there to be the faith, the trusting Christ. The thinking changes to bring me to a place where Christ is attractive or necessary. There's a

change in the thinking that produces me seeing Christ as altogether necessary and beautiful and precious. So, if our salvation hangs on this term, what I'm convinced is this: you can always go to the lexicons and you can go to the dictionaries, but with a term like this, more than anything else, we don't need dictionary definitions. We need biblical definitions. We need the Scriptures to describe repentance for us.

First Biblical Demonstration of Repentance

So the first place I want you to go is just this simple text in Jeremiah 8:6, because I think it so captures what we're after here. I want you to be convinced from Scripture. Up till now, I've just been talking. But I want you to see from Scripture and from Christ's words themselves what is repentance, what does it look like. Here's the first thing: Jeremiah 8:6, in the English Standard Version, "I have paid attention and listened..." This is God speaking. "...But they have not spoken rightly. No man..." and here's our word - ESV says "relent." Every other translation - the majority of them anyway, say "repent." And in the Septuagint, it is our metanoia word group. It is the word for repent. What I'm most interested in is this: "...no man repents of his evil, saying..." this is what I want you to see: "what have I done?" Oh brethren, don't let go of that. If we go out to these neighborhoods and you're preaching repentance, do you know where you want to bring people? Right there. You want to bring people to say: what have I done? You see, the turning hasn't actually happened in the outward, in the actions. What has happened? You've gotten the person in the mind to say: Whoa! You see, they're rethinking. For somebody to say. "what have I done?" is to all of a sudden wake up to the reality that what I've done is not good, what I've done is not right, what I've done - this is bad! What have I done? You see, that's what God wants. God wants the person that's doing evil to suddenly say: what have I done? That's at the heart of repentance.

Second Biblical Demonstration of Repentance

Now, I want to bring us to another passage because what's happened over these last years is I've looked - I've got about six favorite places to go to in Scripture to really draw out the meaning of repentance. The next place I want you to go is actually at the end of our Bibles. It's the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3. Because again, the word "repent" is used. Repent. Rethink. Rethink. Think again. Reconsider. Oh, this one is huge. In Revelation 3:17, notice, it's something that's happening in the thoughts. It's something happening in the mind. What? Well, look, Revelation 3:17. "You say..." Now, you can say, well, that's something you do with your mouth. Yes. But what you speak from the mouth, comes from the heart. As the mouth speaks, you can recognize who the man is. What's he saying? What are these Laodiceans saying about themselves? How do they view themselves? You see it. "I'm rich. I've prospered. I need nothing." And then here's what Jesus says: "You're not realizing..." You see, how you speak gives indication of what you realize in the brain. "You're not realizing you're wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." Now you go down to verse 19. Look what He says, "Be zealous and repent!" Rethink things. Think again. Think in a new way. Are you willing to admit that you possibly might be wrong about your condition? Rethink who you are. Now, this is important for this reason, I receive these emails. "Well, I'm trying to repent," or "I am repenting." And it's almost like you can just see them stretch their head when they say it. "I'm repenting, and God's

not..." But what I want you to see here, repentance should always be associated with weakness. See, this is where we go wrong. If you ever discern people are saying "I'm trying to repent" and the feeling you get is what they're really doing is they're saying "I'm putting forth this effort..." Repentance is a change of thinking where your thinking goes from seeing yourself as having it all together. Repentance is manifest by brokenness. Not-togetherness. The mind changes from seeing oneself as independent and healthy and able to do this and righteous and alive and wonderful in the sight of God to seeing oneself the way we really are. You see, that's what repentance is. It's the mind coming in line with truth. And the truth is that we're really wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. See, it's not togetherness. When people talk about repentance as though it's something they're doing, listen, where repentance is really taking place, the people in their mind are saying, "what have I done?" What have I been claiming to be? What am I really? I am not what I thought I was.

Brethren, I remember when it came into my mind: you are not good and you deserve hell. And suddenly, my eyes were opened. (incomplete thought) Repentance brings us in line with the truth. And this is where so many people go wrong. Repentance is not a work that we do to earn Heaven. It's actually a change of mind about our total inability. Listen, true repentance happens when we're confronted by the Gospel and we're confronted by what Christ did and we rethink everything. We rethink who we are. We rethink if we're really all that well off as we thought, we're really as good as we thought, we're really as rich as we thought, we're really ready for death and judgment day as much as we thought. And we suddenly see, we're broken. We're empty. But you see, it's the mindset. Before you even get to any turning, it's recognizing what's true about ourselves. It's this change of mind about our total inability to save ourselves by anything that we do. This is what we need to recognize: True repentance goes hand-in-hand with brokenness - always. Always. And where there's a sense somebody is talking proudly about their repentance, guaranteed they're more on a penance line of thinking. They've turned it into a work.

Third Biblical Demonstration of Repentance

A third biblical demonstration of repentance. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 21. Oh, I love this one. I love all of these. Matthew 21. You know this parable. Matthew 21:28. "What do you think? A man had two sons..." And what we're going to do is we're going to see repentance put on display for us here. "A man had two sons. He went to the first and he said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not.' But afterward..." the ESV says, "He changed his mind." Frank, what's the KJV say? "He repented." Metamelomai. It's another one of these -meta words. It's the idea of after regret. It's a synonym. It's basically the same concept. Change of mind. See the change of mind. "...and went." "And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, 'the first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, that tax collectors and prostitutes go into the Kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and prostitutes believed him and even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds." Or, "repent." Or I believe in the New American Standard, it says "relent." Feel remorse. Repent and believe in Him. But you see, change your mind and believe. It's the believing in Christ that flows out of the change of mind.

Let me ask you something. Two sons. Which son is the sinner who truly gets saved? First son or second son? First. The father says this: Go and work. The first son says, "No. I will not." What a great picture of sinners! We may have created a god of our own imagination who smiled at us, but when it came to the true God of Scripture and the things He wanted us to do, we shook our fist. Uh huh. Not me. Not me. If that's what God is like, I'm going to create my own. I've got the god of my own imagination, but I don't want the God from there because what He wants me to do? Uh huh, I don't want to do. That is just a perfect picture of sinners. Defiant, rebellious, stubborn. But what happens to the first son? Obviously, he came to a point where he reconsidered, right? He thinks again. What happened was, the sinner comes to the place where he reexamines the claims of Christ that he had formerly ignored and dismissed, but now he thinks again. And he doesn't just think again, he changes his mind. In the past, he thought his father's commandments, they were intrusive. They were inconvenient. Going my own way is much better. His way is too narrow. It's too constricted. I don't like that way. I want freedom. The devil's right there saying, "Yeah, you don't want that way." "It's bad." But then something happens. Something happens. He rethinks. And this time, his thinking changes.

And you can see when the change of mind is real. When the mind changes - listen, if I'm going this way and my mind changes, you can see that it changes because the whole self follows the change. If the mind turns, the whole self follows. When the mind changes, he went. That's what you see. The son in the parable changes his mind, and he went. And you don't want to miss that. Those two little words: "and went." The will - the will. Your will always follows the changed mind. You see a guy driving down the highway that way and he does a U-turn, he goes back that way. Why does he do that? Because he changed his mind. His mind was telling him: go this way. Something happened. Maybe it was the lady on maps said go that way, so he was minded to go that way. And then she said do a U-turn and go that way. Or he saw the restaurant he wanted and now it's back there. Something happened. Something in his thinking changes that affects the will that causes the whole vehicle to turn around.

But something happened up here before the whole thing turned around. That's what you find happening here. Whatever direction he was going in before, it wasn't the direction that the father wanted. If you don't change your mind so as to do the thing you formerly refused to do, then your repentance is a sham. These guys that come along and say: you can change your mind without changing your life, what kind of change of mind is that? You haven't changed your mind about anything. We're talking about a true change of mind. Not just some flippant thing like, well, I think it's going to rain tomorrow, and I changed my mind - maybe it's not going to rain tomorrow. Not some flippant thing like that. We're talking about the man, the things he trusts, what he's living for. We're talking about the heart of the man, the drive of the man, the desires of the man at the deepest level.

Fourth Biblical Demonstration of Repentance

Let's go to another one. Brethren, let's go to the prodigal son in Luke 15. Here's another example. Again, we're going to see repentance put on display. The rethinking that takes place. The change of mind that you see happen. A fourth biblical demonstration of repentance. And I do want you to see that the parable of the prodigal son is indeed a parable of repentance, even though the word itself isn't used from verses 11-32. If you just look at Luke 15:7, you have three

parables here consecutively. And they're all teaching the same reality. If you read through them, you'll see that. Two are very brief. One is extended. But they're all teaching the same thing. If you look at Luke 15:7. "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance." "And likewise (v. 10), just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents..." So basically, you see what's on the table here. Our Lord is dealing with repentance. And now, once again, He takes us to two brothers to illustrate this for us. Verse 11, He said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that's coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had, took a journey into a far country. There he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into the fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself..." You might want to notice that because again, it's got to do with his thinking. He came to himself. "He said, 'how many of my father's hired servants...' You see how he's reasoning. "...have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger." Here's the consequence. Here's what flows out of the change of mind. "I will arise and go to my father." There's the turning. "I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and came to his father, but while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion... ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I've sinned against heaven and before you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.'" And you know how this goes. The father received him, the fatted calf, the older brother doesn't like this. He takes issue with it. Here is repentance put on display.

Here's what I want you to see. Notice before the repentance. Look at verse 12. "Father, give me..." That's before repentance. Boy, that ought to jump out at you. Give me what's coming to me. This is the lost man. Remember? Remember when you were lost? What did God exist for? He exists to answer my prayers. He's like a celestial Santa Claus. Give me. I deserve it. I want it. I'm owed it. I'm upset when I don't get my due. We think God owes us. Do you ever watch how lost people are when they get cancer? "What is God doing?" It's like: "Give me an explanation for why this should happen!" This is how man is. What? An airplane flew into one of the Twin Towers? How could this happen? A tsunami over in Japan? How could this happen? "God, explain Yourself!" See, this basically shows what man's ideas towards God are. You exist to serve me. Give me. Give me what's coming. Give me my inheritance. Give me! And we sulk, we pout. And you know what? Man pouts when it comes to heaven too. "God owes me heaven. I've been a pretty good guy. What's this hell stuff? What?" I think on judgment day, people are going to be amazed. "God owed me heaven." We think God owes us respect. We think God ought to answer to our needs and our wants. We pout. We get angry. We get frustrated when we feel we haven't gotten what we deserved. I mean, lost men see God as having that one primary function. It's like you get in the foxhole and the bombs are coming in. What's the expectation? God save me! Save me out of this! God is supposed to serve me. Did God give His Son for sinners? "Well, of course He did. I expect that. Why? We're just good and God owes it to us. And God does this. It's expected." Fallen man just imagines himself of being worthy. Of

course God does all these things. Father, give me! Give me! Give me! That's what you find here before repentance.

Isn't it amazing he comes to himself and what does he say? The change of mind. How does his talk change? You see it there. Look at verse 19. "I am no longer worthy." Has the Gospel ever confronted you that way? Where you went from thinking God owed you everything? Owing you heaven? And you saw: I am not worthy. Or you look at verse 21. "I have sinned and am no longer worthy." See, again, we go back to the Laodiceans. There's a brokenness that comes with true repentance - not a togetherness. There's the Jeremiah: What have I done? What was I thinking? Father, I have sinned. I'm not worthy. You see what's happening here. What a change of mind! Has this happened to you?

Now, I know you know what the right answer is, but have you been confronted by the Gospel so as to produce this kind of change of mind? Truth comes to the mind and you admit that you've been wrong. You see, that's what rethinking is. It's coming to the place where you're at least considering: have I been wrong? Have I been wrong all this time? Have I been thinking wrongly about who God is and who I am and getting to heaven and who Jesus Christ is and what the cross is all about? Have I been thinking wrong? That's the beginning of repentance. Even coming to the place where considering: I think I've been wrong. Turn. And you see where he rethinks this. Change of mind. Where he rethinks it, where his mind changes, his whole self follows. You see, at first it says he went into a far country. But let me ask you this, a far country? Well, it wasn't very far from him. Who is it far from? What are you talking about a far country? Far from who? Far from the Father. Far from God. That's who it was far from. His back was toward the father. He was trying to get as far away... Give me! Yeah, he'll look to the father when it's "give me," but then he's getting as far away as he can. "But when he came to himself," verse 17, notice what happens. He totally turned towards home. Let me ask you this.

Do you know anything about this? Do you know anything about going along through life - I'm not talking about whether you were religious or not. You may have been going to the church. You may have been lugging the Bible around. But do you know anything about: you're going along and you're confronted by the truth of the Gospel and you turn towards home. You were moving away from there. He rethought his condition. He rethought his circumstances. He changes his mind. I'm going home. I'm going to cast myself on the mercy of my father. That's what happens. I'm unworthy. I've sinned. My only hope is mercy. Before: "It's my due." "Give me what you owe me." "Give me my inheritance!" "Give it to me!" He's not talking that way anymore. His mind is changed, his thinking - rethink, rethink, rethink. And he sees he's got nothing to offer. He can only cast himself on the mercy. The older son? No. There's never a change of mind. There was never a turning towards home. He's the one who's righteous and not in need of any repentance.

Fifth Biblical Demonstration of Repentance

I want to show you a fifth biblical demonstration of repentance. Turn to Acts 3. So often we hear about Acts 2, and rightly so. It's very important: Pentecost, the Spirit. But you know that whole incident that took place after the man at the Beautiful Gate was healed, oh brethren, this is a tremendous and rich portion of Scripture. Notice, verse 1, Peter and John, temple, hour of prayer, 9th hour. Verse 2, there was a lame man there from birth at the Beautiful Gate. He's

asking for alms. Verse 3, Peter and John get asked for alms. Verse 4, Peter directs his gaze at him. "Look at us." Verse 5, he fixed his attention on them - the lame man - he's expecting to receive something. Verse 6, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I you, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." In verse 7, he took him by the hand. He raises him up. Immediately, his feet and ankles are strong. Verse 8, he enters the temple with them walking, leaping, praising God. And all the people saw him. Verse 9 and 10 - they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. All the people utterly astounded, in verse 12, when Peter saw it, he addressed the people. Now, here's the thing. He begins to address the people, but what I want you to do is jump forward to v. 19. "Repent, therefore, and turn back that your sins may be blotted out." You see, he's going to say what he says here because he's calling them to repentance. Notice what he says. Go back to v. 12. "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this? Or why do you stare at us as though by our own power and piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate when he decided to release Him, but you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. You killed the Author of Life."

You see, their thinking was wrong. How do you kill the Author of Life and exchange Him for a murderer? How do you do that? Because your thinking is wrong. You look at Christ: "Crucify Him!" You see, even Paul said, if the leaders would have known that He was the Lord, they wouldn't have crucified Him. If you really look at Him and you realize this is my only way to heaven. There is no other way. This is the One sent into the world to save me from sins, take me to a paradise, forgive all of this, take me to unimaginable riches - you don't kill Him. There has to be a change in thinking. That's what he's coming along: Repent! Reexamine this! Think again! You guys are thinking wrong. How were they thinking? Well, we're Jews. We're the offspring of Abraham. We've got an in here. We're good. We're God's people. This guy? Our leaders? They're wise. They know the law. They're the Pharisees. These are the most righteous people. The Scribes. The Sadducees. All these guys? They think He's a fake. They think He's a deceiver. They led us there when we were before Pilate. They were the ones encouraging us to crucify Him. Certainly if Christ came, the Jewish leaders of all people would recognize Him, would they not? Peter is saying: you better rethink all of this. You need to change your thinking. You killed the Author of Life. You crucified God's servant. Rethink. Rethink. In fact, what he's doing is, you can imagine this guy's over here jumping up and down next to him. Peter's got this guy that they all knew was lame, and what Peter's doing is: Look! Look at this guy! This didn't happen through me and John being somehow miracle workers. This happened in the name of Jesus Christ. Now you guys better start rethinking everything. You better look at this one jumping up and down here and recognize that he's doing this, what you're watching right here is a revelation of the power of the One who you crucified. You need to rethink it. You need to start all over. Think again. Repent. He's the Son of God. He's the Lord of Glory. Change your mind. Get in tune with reality. Line up with things the way they really are. You've been fooled. You've been deluded. You've been duped. You've believed a lie. You guys have been going the wrong way. You think everything is good with you and that you're God's people, but you're not. You think that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is your God, but what you need to recognize is this is His servant. This is His Christ. He sent Him. Rethink. Rethink. Reexamine. And you've

got the proof right here in this guy. Look at him. Let that turn your minds. Let that cause something to happen. Change your mind. Think! Think! Think!

Here's the thing, the world out there, they look at us Christians and they say Christians are stupid. Christians don't think. That's not true. That's not true. Basically what you're finding in Scripture when we're told to call the world to repentance - God has commanded all men everywhere to repent - that means He's commanded all men everywhere to rethink and change their minds. You know who the ones who are not thinking are the people that are out there. We are the people who have thought. We've had our minds changed. We've come face-to-face with Christ. Face-to-face with the cross. Face-to-face with these realities, with the miracle-workings of Christ. And something's happened. If we're genuine, we were confronted by the Gospel, and some sort of rethinking actually took place in our minds.

And one of the starting places is this, are you willing to admit the possibility that you've been wrong? You've been thinking Jesus Christ - some of you young people - you're thinking the Christ of my parents, I don't need Him. You better think again. You're sitting there thinking He's dull, He's boring. Listen, He turned water into wine. He said to that thief next to Him: This day you will be with Me in paradise. Is that irrelevant to your life? Is it? You better think again. People go along and they get these ideas in their heads, and what we need to ask ourselves is: does your little system really work? The things you think, how much do you really know? You've got your ideas about how all this is going to work out, but how much of that is really based on truth? How much of that have you just dreamed up? How much of that is being touted out here by a world that sits in darkness and under the power of the evil one? How much do you really know? You better think again. You better think again. Christ did turn water into wine. And He did take that thief into paradise. And He did make that lame man jump and leap. And He has the ability powerfully to enable a man born lame to all of a sudden walk and jump and leap. Does that have anything to do with your life? If you say no, that has very little to do with my life, okay, you're going to walk out that door. You think somehow your little system, you're ready to meet death? You better think again.

Some of you, you've been playing the part of the Christian, but your conscience has been bothering you because you know that something seems like you're lacking the power of the real thing. You need to think again. Don't be afraid to think again. Listen, sometimes people are afraid to think because they're afraid where the thinking will lead them, but better that it lead you to recognize that you are poor and miserable and blind and naked so that you might turn to Christ to be clothed and to have eye salve put on, to have your eyes opened, and to be healed by Him - better to do that than live in a deception all the time playing it off - that nagging thing: No, I don't want to think. I don't want to think. I don't want to think. Yet, repent, or you will perish. Rethink. Reexamine. Get to the place where you recognize that you might be wrong in all of this. Look at it from that perspective. Rethink your own selves - who you are. Do you see this man jumping up and down? Hadn't you better reconsider? I mean, it's that kind of thing.

What you find is Jesus Christ coming to those cities where He did all of His miracles. And He denounces them because they didn't repent. They didn't rethink. You see what's happening there? I turned water into wine. I healed the centurion's servant. I raised Lazarus from the dead. I fed 5,000 people. Hadn't you better think? Is it possible that you've been wrong? Is there a possibility there? Are you really alright? Are you really ready to live your life

without the God of your parents or the other people in this place - without the Christ? Do you really think that the cross means that little? Do you really think that somehow it's all going to work out in that day on Judgment Day if you turn your back on this Christ? Do you really think so? You better think again. That's what's happening to these Jews. Rethink. Reexamine. Rethink it all. Is Christ really so unimportant as you thought? Is your righteousness really so valuable in the sight of God? Bring out the books. Do the accounting. Look at your life. Is it really so good that you think you can offer that? Do you really think you can stand before God on judgment day? Listen, whatever you're thinking, you better think this way: Death is real and death is coming. And you can't run away from it. You need to think about that. If you've been thinking you're going to live forever, rethink. Think again. Because that's not a reality. He raised that lame man. Christ did that. Is He really so unimportant? Insignificant? Irrelevant? Think. Think. Think. Think!

If you're wrong, admit you've been wrong. Admit that you've been totally, utterly mistaken. I'll tell you, you go through the whole book of John and you get to the end, and he says I've told you all these miracles that Christ did that you might believe. Oh, there's a whole bunch more, but I've told you a few. And I've told you that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Concerning those same miracles, He denounced those cities. Capernaum. Chorazin. Bethsaida. Why? Because they didn't repent when they saw His works. He laid all His credentials out there. And the people looked and they said that doesn't change anything. But you see what Jesus said is this: Which is easier to say? Rise up and walk? Or is it easier to say your sins be forgiven you? But that you might know who He is, that He is the Savior of the world, that He has the power to forgive sins. He says to the man: Rise up and walk. You see what He's doing in all those miracles He did before those people, is He's saying, you better think about who I am. You better rethink. You better reexamine. Are you saved? Are you saved? Have you been confronted by the Gospel and by Christ in such a manner that your old way of thinking was wrecked? Dashed on the rocks? Has that happened? You see, what this tells us, the Gospel is meant to change minds.

When you go out there into these streets, that's what you want to do. We're seeking to get people to think again. To rethink and to change their minds. Do you know what most of the people out there think? They don't know how holy God is. They think somehow it's going to work out when they die. They think that they've been good enough. They think very low thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ. They don't have any idea about God's holy standard. And what you want to do is go out there and not tell them: well, you need to turn from sin. That's only the product of all of this. What you want to tell them: Think again. You're headed for death and you've been sleeping well at night. That tells me you're not thinking right. You need to think again. You think it's okay between you and God. Think again. It's not okay. You've been thinking what Christ did on that cross - oh yeah, that's nice, you've got a little manger you're going to pull out at Christmas. You better think again. God pouring out His wrath on His Son on that cross does not mean you're okay and it's just going to work out in the end. You better think again. This is the reality behind repentance.

One man who attended a teaching module down in Nicaragua said it's offensive to tell people to repent. Of course, it is. When we say to the sinner: you think all is well in your life? Think again. It's not well. You see, you put your finger right on the apple of their eye when you

say your righteousnesses are filthy rags. All your morality, all your religion - you think it holds weight. It not only is not a positive asset in your life, it's a negative debt. It's a filthy rag. It's polluted. It's detestable in the sight of God. Is that offensive? Yeah, that's offensive. You think you're going to Heaven, but you're not - not on the road you're on right now. You better rethink that. You need to change your mind. Change your mind. Get in step with reality. You think God is smiling at you, but He's not. Scripture says you're under the wrath of God even now. You better rethink. You better start to admit, you might be wrong.

You children, you're watching your parents. Listen, your parents aren't perfect, and don't sit there and look at their life and say, well, I see where they fail and where they fall short. What is that? What is that to you? Are you going to look at that and say: Well, that justifies me to ignore Christ. No, all that shows you is that sinners need Christ, and we need Him all the way to the end, to the very last day. But are you going to turn your back and say: "I don't need Him." You better think again. Because I'll tell you, that day is coming when you're going to have to stand before God, and you'll think right then. You'll know. Change your mind now. Rethink this thing now. This Christ - some of you young people, you gather out there. It's like as fast as you can get away. Get away from this thinking, get away from this religion of your parents. Get out there. Get closer towards the world. Move out toward the sidewalk. We see you out there. (incomplete thought) Remember how it is. The devil plucks up the seed. And you want to get out there and let each other pluck it up - the evil influences, the worldly influences, let it get plucked up. Because you want it gone. You feel better, but listen, there's a day coming when you won't feel better. You better think again. This thing that you want to so casually throw off and run away from and live it up and live your life - you better think again. Because what Jesus said is those who believe in Him, those who come to Him, He gives to them life and more abundantly. You're on the way of death. You better think again. It feels like life. It feels like freedom, but it's a devilish one and it's a deception.

And all the time, Jesus is calling you: Come unto Me. I'll give you life and I'll give it to you more abundantly. And I will forgive every single one of the sins and I'll take you to paradise just like I did that thief. You better think again. What I'm offering you is the Treasure of all treasures. Is it offensive to tell people those kinds of things? Is it offensive to tell people that their sins mount up to Heaven? And that pretty soon the ground underneath them is not going to bear them up anymore? It's going to give way and they're going to fall right into that lake of fire. Yes, that offends people, but that is the truth. And we need to call them: think again, think again, think again. Ask yourselves this question. Some of you, you're sitting here, you know you're not Christians, or you know you've been playing a game. You think having the name without having Christ is going to be sufficient in that day? You need to think about that again. Only Christ - not the name. There was a church that had the name, but they were dead. You don't want to be that. Think again.

Think. Think. Is all well with you? Is it well? Are you good? Look at your life. Bring out the balances. Throw it in there. I can look at my life and I can say God changed my life, but I need the righteousness of Christ. Think again. Are you really that good? Is your morality really going to stand up? What about your past? What are you going to do about that? What about the things you've done? What about the things you did in the dark that nobody else knows about? You think they just go away? They don't. And Jesus said one day is coming when everything is

going to be announced on the housetops. I'll tell you what, when it comes to that day, you better think again. I'll tell you what I want: I want a Savior who has covered it all with His blood so that when I stand there, nothing. Nothing. You don't want to wait till that day to figure out you needed Christ. Oh, the fool you will feel yourself to be! I huddled around my friends and ran from the God of that church and the God of my parents. Now I'm thinking again when it's too late. Don't do that. Don't do that. Admit you've been so wrong. This is repentance. This is repentance. Change of mind. A rethinking. And it will always turn the whole self. Brethren, this is what we want to set forth as repentance. It's not togetherness. It's: what have I done? That's where you want to bring sinners. What have I done? And you see, what's going on in the mind when that happens: they've rethought. The way they were on, the things that they've done, they thought were good, they thought were safe. They thought it was right. There's a way that seems right to a man. What have I done? How have I gotten here? How have I toyed with my life?

I'll tell you, when you really start thinking that way, it will produce trembling. It will produce sorrow. Because you know what you come to recognize? You come to recognize that you've lived in rebellion, you've been an offense to God, you've raised your fist at Him. What you come to recognize is the very Savior who suffered the way He suffered, you've despised Him. And as your mind changes and you begin to recognize who you are, you recognize how ugly you are to Him. There is a remorse. There's a regret. There's a godly sorrow that accompanies this. When that mind turns right and you see what you were, and how guilty you are, and how much of an ugliness... You think about it. You turn and you walk to the Father. And He's watching from afar and He comes running and He embraces you. And He puts the robe on you and He kills the fatted calf. And you just are all the more overwhelmed with how you acted towards Him. And that's where we as Christians come to. We remember what we did when we were lost, how we defied Him, how we hated Him, how we hated His Son, we hated His Word, we hated His people. And what graciousness! That Gospel came and it confronted us and the mind is turned, the mind is changed. All you have to do is think about the words. Repent. Rethink. Metanoia. After-thought. Change the mind. That's what it is. Don't be afraid of that. Because if that happens, it changes everything.

Father, I pray... I pray for clarity, I pray, Lord, that my brothers and sisters, we would be clear. We would see in these passages of Scripture just the nature of repentance - that which produces the: what have I done? Lord, I pray that this would be something that would be clear in our midst and something that You would allow us to press forcefully, powerfully upon the lost in our church - those that meet within these walls and those outside that You'll allow us to reach out to. I pray all this in Christ's name, Amen.