***Despising the Road to Repentance  
RO12-01***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 2:4. Our subject is "Despising the Road to Repentance."

**The Moral Unbeliever**

We are studying about the moral unbeliever – the good person who does not see that he has any need for coming to Jesus Christ as personal Savior. We have seen in this context that this person has been guilty of ignoring the fact of what he really is. He has assumed that, because he externally does not do the evil things that the immoral unbeliever of chapter 1 does, that, therefore, he will not come under God's condemnation – that somehow he's better, and he's going to escape what God is going to bring in judgment upon the open sinner. However, he does not realize, Paul points out, that he does the same thing. Because he has an old sin nature within him, he is guilty of performing evil. Even his human good is evil. As a matter of fact, in the very next verse coming up in chapter 2, we're going to learn that unbelievers store up for themselves more and more of the wrath of God for every good deed they do. And that really blows the top off of an unbeliever's head – when you tell him that for every good work you perform as an unbeliever, the wrath of God mounts up against you all the more. Why? Because every good work that flows from the old sin nature is an act of evil, and every act of evil has against it the judgment of God.

So, the poor unbeliever who is of the moral type who is running around doing his good works, and thinking that he's making points with God, and progress toward heaven, is only making things worse for himself when he gets out into eternity and has to face God.

In this country today, we live in an era that has been described as the post-Christian era; that is, our society no longer respects and esteems biblical principles. It no longer views the Bible as a book which has authority in American life. Consequently, most younger Americans do not have a consciousness of guilt for their sins. Most younger Americans participate in violations of God's moral system without any conscious guilt. They have a subconscious guilt which they are not aware of, and this is what creates tensions within them psychologically, and which then have an effect upon them mentally. That is because they've been deluded by the attitudes of our society, that people can do wrong, as per what God condemns, and that these things are not right, and that these things are only an outdated form of morality. But while you may consciously remove your sense of guilt, you cannot remove it subconsciously, and it eats away in your soul until it has its surface effects.

**Self-Righteousness**

So, it creates a false sense of values. It creates a false ground for morality, and a false sense of justification with God. The moral unbeliever, because he has his false ground of morality, and because out of that grows a self-righteousness on his part, is one of the most insufferable kind of people you can find on the face of the earth. These are the type of people, whether they be believers or unbelievers, who spend their time judging what others do.

The reason it is necessary for the self-righteous type of both the believer and unbeliever to be forever judging what other people do, and having remarks and comments and opinions about it, is because this is necessary to bolster their own image about their own self-righteousness. Obviously, if you created a self-righteousness for yourself, you're going to have to keep propping it up by proving to yourself that indeed you are better than somebody else that you have to deal with in the circle of your life – someone who is acting in a way that you can condemn. The more you can condemn in others, the better you will look in your own eyes, and the greater will be the delusion upon yourself that somehow you are acceptable to God: somehow, as an unbeliever, you're going to make it into heaven on the basis of your self-righteousness; or, somehow, as a believer, you have a spiritual status which you do not at all possess.

So, the self-righteous person is always looking for someone that he considers worse than himself, and then zeros in on him. However, the self-righteous person, you will discover, is also a very selfish and a very self-centered individual. He is easily offended, especially if his pseudo righteousness is threatened by the Word of God. Just let the preacher start pointing his finger against these things that are the basis of his false sense of righteousness, and he will feel so threatened that he will flee that congregation, because he cannot stand coming up face-to-face with the fact that he's a fraud in the eyes of God and in the eyes of men. But the self-righteous type actually has nothing with which to stand on before God or before man.

Therefore, the self-righteous type, because he is deluded, and yet has nothing to stand upon before God in facing righteousness, is in a very dangerous position. This man and this woman, because of their self-righteousness, believe they have it made. Therefore, when they are confronted with what God has provided through His grace, they express a contempt toward what God has given them. They don't think that they need what the grace of God has provided them relative to their sins. That's what Paul is talking about in Romans 2:4, when he says, "Or you despise the riches of His goodness, and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance."

In verse 3, the moral unbeliever rationalized his state as being acceptable to God, which was characterized by the word "think:" "And think this, O moral, self-righteous man." Then it goes on to explain how he thinks that because he doesn't openly do the sins that the immoral man does, that somehow he is not as bad in God's eyes. So, he acquires a self-righteousness which he assumes makes him acceptable to a holy God. He forgets that, because he was born with an old sin nature, he's already doomed in God's sight, even if he never did a single thing wrong. This attitude, therefore, leads the moral unbeliever to having an attitude of contempt toward a salvation which is non-meritorious, but one which you simply accept.

So, in verse 4, the apostle Paul adds a parallel idea. He introduces it with the word "or," which is a little Greek particle. Actually, this sentence is making a statement, but it is a sentence which is introduced here by this little particle so that it actually comes out as a question, Paul is asking the moral unbeliever a question: "Or despises." The word "despises" is "kataphroneo." This is made up of two words. The word "kata" in the Greek Bible is a preposition which means "down." "Phroneo" is a verb which means "to think." So that the word together means "to think down upon" or "to hold in contempt" or "to think little of." In ordinary English, we would say "to look down your nose at." "Kataphroneo" means "to look down your nose at." The apostle Paul says in verse 3 that rationalize that somehow, because you are better in your conduct than the immoral person is, that you're going to make it with God, and you will get to heaven.

Or on the other hand, in addition to that, you despise (you look down your nose) at the riches of His goodness. The self-righteous person is underestimating the significance of the fact that God has done something for him in his grace which he should be esteeming. The self-righteous person is building human good, and he's building that human good by comparing himself to somebody else's evil. That's why, if you move in a bad crowd, it is easier for you to look much better to yourself and to other people. The worse the crowd is that you move in, the more self-righteous you are. There are actually people who do prefer moving around with bad people because it makes them feel so good that they're not like those people.

**The Riches of God**

The self-righteousness that evolves, consequently, blinds this unbeliever to his need for the riches of God's grace. The word "despises" means that the moral unbeliever doesn't see his need for the grace of God in behalf of his sin. In other words, he is an anti-grace person. The moral person is sick with the disease of the old sin nature, and yet he has contempt for the remedy which has provided for that disease. That's what Paul is saying. You think you're better than other people, and worse than that, you look down your nose at the fact that God has given a remedy for the disease of sin. This remedy is described as the riches of God. This is "ploutos," from which you can see that you get the English word "plutocrat," which refers to a very wealthy person. The thing that the moral unbeliever holds in contempt is the riches of God. And the riches of God here refer to the grace of God – the kind favors of God which the sinner does not deserve.

This word "riches" is a word of quantity. It's like we say, "A bucket of something;" or we say, "A pound of something;" or, "A dollar's worth of something." This word, "ploutos," means "a wealth of something" which comes to us from God. It reflects the generosity of God, and this generosity is described from God specifically in three things.

1. **The Goodness of God**

First of all, there is the goodness of God. That's the "chrestotes" in the Greek. "Chrestotes" is a word that stands for what is good in the sense of being morally good. It is an uprightness. This is the word which is used a little later here in Romans 3:12, where Paul says, "They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that is good; no, not one." And he uses this word "chrestotes." There is no one who is an unbeliever (who is unregenerate), who does one thing that is morally good. Even if he goes out and he plants a garden, and then he takes the food that he raises, and gives it to the poor, God says, "That is an evil thing that you have done, because as an unbeliever, that good act is human good from the old sin nature, and anything from the sin nature is evil in the sight of God."

So, this man or this woman (moral unbelievers) look upon the moral rightness of God (the generosity) – the deeds of grace and tenderness and compassion that God performs for this unbeliever, and he holds it in contempt. This is God's gracious provision for the moral unbeliever. This is expressed in a variety of ways, not the least, of course, is the salvation which God has provided for the moral unbeliever, which He could never have provided for himself.

Please remember that as soon as Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God would have been perfectly wholly and perfectly right had He cast them immediately into the lake of fire. Please remember that God could have permitted the human race to have sinned from the time of Adam and Eve all the way down to this moment today, and then cast the whole lot of us into hell, and been perfectly holy and just when he did that. God could have let the whole human race propagate itself with its old sin nature, and then destroyed the thing in the lake of fire, and He would have been absolutely holy when He did that. In other words, God didn't have to do a thing about what Adam and Eve did to the race in introducing a nature of sin that prevented people from having fellowship with God, and prevented them from having eternal life in heaven. God didn't have to do a thing about that. And the moral unbeliever does not understand that when God comes along, and He does something about that, and then God does these three things, all of which are just trying to lead this man to accept what God has provided, he does not understand that he should esteem that and be terrifically grateful. Instead, he holds it in contempt.

A person couldn't go to heaven even if he never sinned. A person can't go to heaven, even if he stops ending now, and never sins again. There just is no hope. And yet, God's goodness can certainly be seen by this provision of a plan of salvation for sinners who, at the same time, despise the justification that comes by faith apart from human good.

God's goodness is also evident in the fact that unbelievers are not in hell at this moment. God could have cast you into hell the moment you did your first evil act. Instead, He permits you to live on this earth. Evil has been performed by each of us this past week, yet we're alive. We're kept breathing. For the unbeliever, this is particularly significant. For every act of evil that unbeliever has done, God could have very justifiably now taken his life and sent him to hell. Instead, he's still breathing. He's still alive. That is a gracious act of the goodness of God to give that person a chance to be born again.

God's provision for unbelievers extends to the fact that He has provided them with good health. He has provided them with food to make the brain operate, so that the mind can function and make a decision for or against Jesus Christ. He has provided the unbeliever with prosperity. He has given the freedom to be able to make this choice. There are some people in some parts of the communist world who do not get the information about the gospel. They don't even have the freedom, therefore, to make the choice. God has given food; He has given; He has given shelter; He has given clothing; He has given recreation; and, He has given employment. All of these things have been provided because of the "chrestotes" of God – the goodness of God, and the abundance of the riches of His goodness.

**Common Grace**

This flows from God because God has provided what we call "common grace." Common grace flows from God, and it engulfs believer and unbeliever alike. But it is these things which come from the common grace of God such that a thinking person would stop and say, "You know, I am really blessed and honored for this." Even a heathen from some primitive tribes will look upon an animal, and he will say, "This animal is keeping me alive, such that I've been able to hunt him down and kill him." So, even the heathen mind looks out there and says, "There is the god of the hunt, and I want to thank the god of the hunt for being good enough to let me bring this deer down." The heathen mind very naturally thinks in terms of gratitude for that which sustains. But the more civilized the person is, the less he is inclined to realize the common grace of God that is upon him, to give him all these things that he does not deserve, but which enable him to be able to think about eternal life.

Just think, if you were a Russian slave labor camp, or a Chinese slave labor camp, where you were rolled out at 4:30 in the morning to start a day of intensely hard labor, perhaps in the cold stretches of Siberia, and you were worked all day like an animal until darkness fell, and then you were marched back to your barracks and given some kind of a meal, and you stumbled to the board that you were given to sleep on, in complete exhaustion in order to try to recoup enough strength to go through the whole misery again tomorrow. How much time do you think a person like that has to consider and to think about spiritual things, or to think about anything at all? Have you ever thanked God for the fact that you can sit down in a chair and do nothing? How many unbelievers realize that this is part of the goodness of God to enable them to sit down in a chair and to think?

Now this is what God, in His goodness, has given. And yet the moral unbelievable looks at this, and he says, "So, what?" He never esteems it. He never relates it to himself. He never realizes that this is opening the door to eternal life. All these provisions reveal that God is trying to draw people to Himself. But the unbeliever actually feels that he's entitled to these things. Our country is filled with unbelievers who feel that the very fact that they drew a breath of life, that our society now owes them a living. And they look upon God with the same indifference as one who is responsible to provide them with this kind of grace.

So, obviously, the goodness of God from salvation to all the provisions of life, to everything that makes it possible for a person to consider it, and to make a decision and come to eternal life – all of this is indeed the wealth of the goodness of God toward the unbelievers.

1. **Forbearance**

The wealth of God's grace is also expressed by the word "forbearance." The word "forbearance" is "anoche." "Anoche" comes from a verb "anecho." Let's split the word in two. The first part "an" comes from a little preposition "ana." "Ana" means "up." The word "echo" is a verb, and it means "to hold." Thus we put it together, and we get the idea of "to hold up." God is holding up. And this word is referring to the fact that God is delaying, or He is bearing with. He is tolerating. That's a good word. You could translate it as: "God is tolerating what the moral unbeliever is doing. God is holding up His judgment and His wrath. He is tolerating." The word connotes a delay in divine punishment which is due the moral unbeliever. God is rich in delaying the exercise of His just wrath against this kind of person.

The moral unbeliever, again, does not esteem the fact that God is delaying lowering the boom on him, because he doesn't think that he's that bad off with God. He does not realize that he is under the wrath of God. He knows that the immoral man is under the wrath of God, but he, as a self-righteous moral person, does not view himself under the divine judgments of God. Therefore, he does not esteem the fact that God is delaying the judgment that is certain to come upon him, and thus he does not flee to the safety of Jesus Christ.

You have this same word used in Romans 3:25: "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation (a satisfaction) through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God" (the delaying of God). In times past, God passed over the sins of believers. He delayed bringing judgment against those sins because His Son was going to go to the cross, and that judgment was going to be placed upon Him.

So, in the Old Testament, when people were born-again, they were born-again on credit. God said, "I'm going to forbear judging your sins against you even though you die. But My Son is coming, and I'm going to give you credit ahead of time. And when He dies, He will cover your sins. And God tolerated their sins.

In classical Greek, this word "anoche" was used to describe a truce between two combatants. It was a truce of arms. It was a temporary lull in the fighting. Perhaps we might describe it today with the word that's so popular – the word "detente." "Anoche" meant that two combatants came to a temporary condition where they were holding off from attacking one another. But the reason was to resolve the conflict. And they both understood that this was a temporary truce, and that if they could not settle their differences, they were going to get at each other's throat again, and they were going to go back into combat with one another.

The moral unbeliever does not realize that he actually has a truce with God currently. That's what he has in the word "anoche." He has a truce. He has a tolerance toward him, which God is exercising, but that truce ends the second that person dies. The moment that person closes his eyes in physical death, the truce is over, and God's wrath begins being poured out upon that person, as he immediately finds his soul in Hades (in Torments). So, God's grace is rich in tolerance of unbelievers on the earth for a while. Yet they do not esteem this kindness. So, they let it slip by.

1. **Longsuffering**

Paul says that there is a third expression of the wealth of God's grace, and that's called His longsuffering. That's "makrothumia" in the Greek Bible. This comes from the Greek word "makros," which means "long;" and, "thumos," which means "temper." So, longsuffering means long-tempered, or we would say "patient." God recognizes how evil and confused the moral unbeliever is. So, God is rich in the patience that waits for him to believe in Christ. The Bible many times describes how we are frail; how we are made of dust; and, how God knows how weak we are because of our sinful condition, and the state in which we find ourselves. God just goes out in loving sympathy to us, just as you would toward a person who was suffering from a great illness. And you knew how his energies were sapped – how he was just incapacitated physically. And yet he had to earn a living. He had responsibilities. And your heart would go out to that person.

That's what this word is describing. God recognizes what the disease of sin has done to us; how it's made us spiritually insane; and, how it has deranged our good judgment. God recognizes how evil and confused the moral unbeliever is. So, God is rich in patience, waiting for this man, and waiting for this woman, to turn away from evil, and to the living God. This word refers specifically to patience against an antagonistic person. God is rich in the patience with those who are His enemies. For that's what the moral unbeliever is. He is the moral enemy of God. He is antagonistic to grace. He does not appreciate being told that he is going to hell. Consequently, if he gives money to the poor; if he does many works of mercy; and, if he is a good standing member in the community, he goes to a church where he wants to be recognized as a good man, and he will not tolerate sitting in a congregation where some preacher tells him, sitting there dressed in his fine clothes; driving his fine car to his fine house; and, moving in his fine social circles, that he is condemned by God, and going to hell. The moral unbeliever does not appreciate that.

What the Word of God is saying is that he will not tolerate it. He is so pathetic. He will not respect that God is acting in richness of grace toward him. But one of the riches of the grace of God is that God is patient; He's patient; He's patient. The Lord looks down upon this character and he shakes his head, but He is patient. He is not antagonistic. He has ample provocation to send this guy to hell right now. Yet He is patient. The unbeliever is lacking in esteem for that patience because the moral man thinks that he is acceptable to God. He doesn't think that he is an offense to the holiness of God. This kind of person is indeed an antagonistic toward God, and it takes a monumental patience to deal with him.

So, the question that we have here by Paul to the moral unbeliever is: you not only rationalize that you're better than immoral people, and do you because of that, that you're going to escape the judgment of God? In verse 4, he says, "Well, let me put a parallel line of thought to that. You're holding in contempt the fact that God's grace has a wealth of expression in the goodness of God – the works of common grace that He provides for you, and the provisions that He makes for you. In the forbearance of God, in holding back lowering the boom upon you, and in the patience of God: tolerating your insolence; tolerating your contempt for God; and, tolerating your plumb stupidity toward everything that you see God doing, you don't have the brains to see that this is something that you do not deserve, and that it should melt your heart in tenderness, and cause you to reach out for this God.

The answer to this question is in the affirmative. Yes, you are doing all of these things. You are holding the wealth of God's grace in contempt. The same ingratitude that was expressed on the part of the immoral unbeliever in Romans 1:21 is now expressed by the moral unbeliever in Romans 2:4.

So, the moral unbeliever ends up, because of his contempt for what God is doing in His grace, rejecting and ignoring Christ as Savior. And he enters the lake of fire, and he spends eternity with a lot of other moral unbelievers, who also thought that they did not need what the grace of God provided.

Now that is the contempt on the part of the moral unbeliever. But this contempt stems, this verse shows us, from an ignorance on the part of the moral unbeliever. The last part of the verse says, "Not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance." The words "not knowing" is two words in English, but one word in the Greek Bible: "agnoeo." "Agnoeo" means "to be ignorant." Here it implies not considering a fact which the moral person is without excuse for missing. Even the heathen recognizes that he should be grateful for the provisions of somebody who is out there taking care of him. Paul is saying that you are ignorant. You have an ignorance toward the goodness of God. This is in the present sense. It is a continual ignorance. It’s active. It's by your choice. It is a participle. It's a statement of fact.

The purpose of God's riches of grace toward the unbeliever is clear to those who are not blinded by their own false self-righteousness. These people think that if they accumulate enough good works, that they will qualify for heaven. So, they're blinded. They are ignorant to what the grace of God is extending to them. These people fail to understand that all of their good works from the old sin nature are evil in God's view. This kind of human righteousness is really big with moral unbelievers. But this kind of human righteousness is described in the Bible as filthy rags in God's sight.

So, Paul says, "Being ignorant that." The word "that" is "hoti," and this is introducing the reasons why the grace of God is so rich toward the unbeliever: "Not knowing that the goodness." Here we have a variation on the word "goodness." This time it's "chrestos," related to "chrestotes" that we had a minute ago. This is "chrestos." This is again the kindness of God – the goodness of God, summarizing all of His grace: "Being ignorant that the purpose of this kindness and goodness which God extends." And it is *the* God in the Greek, so it refers to God the Father: "That the goodness of God leads you." The word "leads" is "ago." "Ago" is a word that expresses conduct (conducting). God is conducting you. He is taking the moral unbeliever someplace. It expresses the purpose of the richness of God's grace. It is to take you to something, or to take you someplace.

The reason God is so good to you is that He hopes to lead you to something, and that is to persuade you through the evidences of His goodness, forbearance, and patience that you need Jesus Christ as Savior – to be persuaded by His tender grace. He is leading you. This is present active indicative. Present means that God constantly does this for the unbeliever. He is constantly pushing him and pushing him and pushing him toward Jesus Christ. Active means that God the Father Himself takes charge of every unbeliever to move; to surround him with evidences; and, to surround him with encouragements that are moving him toward Jesus Christ. Indicative means that this is a statement of fact.

**Repentance**

"Being ignorant of the fact that the goodness of God is moving you to." The word "to" is the Greek word "eis," which means "into." His goodness is moving you into a certain condition. And what is that? Repentance. And here we have a subject that is highly misunderstood. The Greek word is a noun: "metanoia." The word means "an afterthought." What does repentance mean? From the Greek language, get it straight. Repentance means an afterthought, meaning "a change of mind." *Repentance means changing your mind.* This is a noun, and it has no emotional connotation. It is related to a verb "metanoeo." Neither one of these words has any emotional connotations.

Generally, when you think about the word "repentance," what do you think about? "Well you think about a great big church service. An evangelist has just given a very moving appeal for people to walk forward in the aisle, and to come down to the mourners' bench, where they may weep, and where they may wail, and they may cry out to God about how sorry they are for their sins. Have you ever thought you needed to repent? Has someone along the line confused you, and told you, "Well, if you want to be saved, the first thing you have to do is repent. Step number one is to repent. Step number two is to confess your sins. Step number three is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Step number four is to clean up your life. Step number five is to get baptized. Step number six it to join the church." I picked up the track one time that said, "15 Steps to Salvation." I'm here to tell you that, on the authority of the Word of God, that there are no steps to salvation. And this does not happen to be a step to salvation. There is no emotional connotation in the Greek word for repent – none whatsoever.

However, there is a Greek word "metamelomai," which is translated into English as "repent," and it does stand for repentance. But it would be better translated by the word "regret," because "metamelomai" includes an emotional factor. "Metamelomai" means that you feel sorry for something that you did, or something you said, or something you thought. But when it comes to eternal life; to salvation; and, to coming to the new birth, "metamelomai" is never used. Only "metanoeo" is used in connection with salvation. Repentance unto salvation does not have any emotional connotation at all. But "metamelomai" has the idea of regret.

**The Two Sons**

For example, in Matthew 21:29, you have this word used, where you have the description of two sons. The father told these two sons to go into the vineyard to work. One son said, "I will," but he didn't go. Verse 29: "He answered and said, "I will not. But afterward, he repented and went." One of the son said, "I won't go." Then he had an emotional reaction toward refusing his father to go to work in the vineyard. And that emotional reaction caused him to change his mind. He regretted the decision he made, and he did go and work after all. That's a beautiful example of an emotional reaction that leads you to change your mind.

However, what God is asking the moral unbeliever to do is to accept what the riches of His grace are trying to make clear to him, and the opportunity that is being given to him to receive Christ as Savior. God is not asking you to start crying; to start wailing; to start beating your breast; to whip your clothes apart; to sit in ashes; or, to do anything else to show that you are really sorry for your sins. That is preacher confusion. And you should know enough about the Greek language now that no preacher will ever be able to make a fool out of you or any unbeliever in the sight of your doing.

**Judas**

Another good example of this (the very great difference between these two Greek words) is found in Matthew 27:3, that tells what Judas did. Notice. Maybe you've asked this question and wondered about this: "Then Judas, who had betrayed Him (that is, Jesus), when he saw that he was condemned, repented, and brought again the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priest and elders." And you might say, "Well, Judas repented. Judas is in heaven. That dirty so-and-so." And you don't know if you want to be in heaven if he's there. Well, it's no comfort to us, but I can tell you that Judas is not in heaven, because the Greek Bible makes it clear to us that what Judas did was "metamelomai." Judas saw what he had done. Jesus was brought under condemnation, and Judas had an emotional reaction and said, "Boy, that was a dirty thing I did. I hate it." And he changed his mind. He took the money and said, "Here, take it back. That was a dirty thing for me to do. I feel awful about it." But the thing that Judas did not do was "metanoeo." He did not repent in his mind (in his attitude) toward Jesus Christ. The mental attitude of Judas was not changed toward Christ. He did not look upon him as the Savior God that the other 11 disciples viewed Jesus as. The only repentance Judas had was that he got to feeling sorry for what he did, but that did not change his mind.

**Believing in Christ as Savior**

So, all the goodness of God (the grace of God) has been evidenced in these three factors which have been mentioned here: God's goodness; His forbearance; and, His patience. All of these things are designed to change the mind of the moral unbeliever, concerning what? Concerning his own self-righteousness; concerning the sin that is upon him; and, concerning the hopelessness of solving this problem, and making himself acceptable to God, and thus to turn to Jesus Christ, and accept Him as Savior. That's all God is trying to do. That's the kind of mental attitude change of mind that God is trying, by His rich grace, to lead the moral unbeliever to. The object of repentance (or the change of mind) in the Bible is always indicated in the context. An unbeliever changes his mind about Jesus Christ, and thus he believes in Christ as Savior (Matthew 12:41, Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3, Luke 15:10, Luke 16:30). I wish we had time to read every one of these verses. I think it would make it very clear to you that repentance is an act of believing in Christ as Savior. There's no other way you can repent. The unbeliever changes his mind about Jesus Christ.

How do you change your mind about Jesus Christ? How do you repent? There is only one way – by trusting Christ as Savior. That's what the word "believe" means. That's why you must always remember that the word "believe" and "repent" are synonymous in Scripture. They are the same thing. You can't have one without the other. It's like love and marriage. "Believe" and "repent" always go together. They're synonymous. They're the same thing. Therefore, you can't say, "Well, the first step of salvation is to repent, and then the next step is to believe." Unless you believe in Christ as Savior, you have not changed your mind concerning sin; concerning your self-righteousness; and, concerning your need of a Savior. You change your mind by believing.

Here are a few Scriptures that you may pursue at your own leisure: Acts 17:30; Acts 20:20; Acts 26:20; Hebrews 12:17; and, 2 Peter 3:9. All of these shows that "repent" and "believe" are synonymous. Changing your mind is to accept Christ as Savior. This change of mental attitude comes about as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of the unbeliever. John 16:8-11 describe that to us. Repentance in the Bible does not mean going to the mourners' bench. Repentance in the Bible means to change your mind about Jesus Christ, and to believe in Him as Savior. It does not mean to be sorry for something you've done.

**About-Face**

The best word, perhaps, in our language to describe repentance is the military command "about-face." That's what repentance is. It is facing in one direction, and accepting God's command, which is about-face, and about-face is to turn around and face the other direction. What have you done when you had made an about face spiritually relative to God and to your sins? What you have done is very marvelously and very specifically described for us in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, where Paul says, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God (you about-faced to God from idols to serve the living and true God." Now that is repentance. That's the scriptural definition. You about-faced from your idols to serve the living and true God.

So, the moral unbeliever, without realizing it, is facing his condemnation here; his idols; and, all of the things he's trusting in – the idol of his self-righteousness and everything else. And finally, God is wooing him through the riches of His grace: through God's good things He gives him; through God holding back the judgment; and, through God's patience and tolerating what he's doing. Finally, he comes to his senses. Under the wooing of the Holy Spirit, this person realizes that he needs to about-face, and he turns from all of his idols, 180 degrees, and he faces the living God. He believes in Christ as Savior. That is biblical repentance: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (which means 'change your mind about Him'), and you shall be saved."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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