***The Doctrine of Repentance, No. 2

RV32-01***

We are studying the letter to the church at Sardis in Revelation 3. The Sardis believers needed to return to Bible doctrine principles in order to correct an unspiritual condition which existed in their midst. This unspiritual condition was expressed in producing human good works which the Lord Jesus Christ condemns. They were living out of temporal fellowship, and consequently, were walking in the evil of sins and human good, while at the same time possessing a sound doctrinal statement. They needed to return, therefore, to the doctrine which they knew, and to stabilize their lives with positive volition toward that divine viewpoint doctrine.

**Repentance**

The correction in Sardis entails repentance – repentance toward the violations of the Word of God that they had been practicing. We saw in the previous session that the Old Testament word for "repent," the Hebrew word "nacham," and the Greek word "metanoeo" used in the New Testament, both basically mean the same thing as God the Holy Spirit uses them in Scripture. And that is simply to have a change of mind – to change the mind about something. While certain emotions may be present at the time of this mental change, they do not constitute repentance.

So, the first thing we should have learned thus far is to detach the concept of emotions from repentance. Repentance does not mean weeping. Repentance does not mean feeling sorry for your sins. Repentance does not have any emotional connotation as God the Holy Spirit uses these words. It has only a mental connotation – a mental change of viewpoint.

There is another Greek word for "repentance" which does connote an emotional factor. It is "metamelomai." "Metamelomai" connotes repentance in terms of being sorry or being grieved for one's evil, but this word is never used in terms of the repentance that results in salvation. This is the kind of repentance that Judas performed after he saw the consequences of his act of betrayal. But it was not a repentance that changed his viewpoint toward Jesus Christ as Savior.

New Testament repentance means to turn from evil unto the righteous standards of God. That has actually been illustrated in the very book we are studying. Revelation 2:21, for example, makes that clear: "I gave her space to repent ("metanoeo") of her fornication (to change her mind concerning her evil), and she repented not. (She did not change her mind.) Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her in great tribulation, except they repent" (except they change their mind concerning their deeds). That verse indicates to us that repentance means turning from evil unto the righteous standards of God. Revelation 2:21-22 and Revelation 3:3 (the verse that we are currently studying) indicates that same concept. Also, Revelation 3:19 says, "As many as I love, I review and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent. Here again the indication is, "I am rebuking; I am punishing; and, I am chastening" because of what? Because of evil. And I want to not do those things, and I will not do those things on the basis of your changing your mind – your mental attitude toward this evil. That is repentance.

Repentance in salvation (we also pointed out) is inherent in believing in Jesus Christ as one's Savior. Repentance is not a separate fact from believing. You cannot say, "If you want to be saved, step number one is to repent, and step number two is to believe. That is wrong. You cannot actually repent without believing doctrine. In the case of salvation, Jesus Christ is the object of our faith, and that automatically involves a change of mind from allegiance to false gods to the true God, so that repentance is turning from an evil object of allegiance to a divine object of allegiance.

This is illustrated in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, where we read, "For they themselves show us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." There you have repentance demonstrated. It's a change of mind. Or you might call it an about-face – turning from facing one direction to the other direction: 180 degrees. Here it is stated as to turning to God (the truth) from the idols that they had previously worshiped (to that which is false). It is turning from error (changing your mind about that), and turning to Jesus Christ.

Obviously you cannot turn from evil unless you are ready to turn toward God's viewpoint. You cannot turn from human viewpoint unless you turn to divine viewpoint. These are two poles. You go from one to the other. There's no midway point in between. So the about-face (the change of mind) is 180 degrees.

Repentance as sorrow for one's sin is not involved again in any of this, because it is this kind of a mental change. It's not part of receiving Christ as Savior. It is a very serious matter when you hear somebody expressing the gospel (appealing to people to be saved), and in some way implying that repentance is some step that they must take in between – that they must have some attitude toward their sins. That is nonsense. It is unscriptural. It has nothing to do with being saved. The only thing that is involved in being saved is believing in Christ as Savior. And as 1 Thessalonians 1:9 indicates, to turn from your idols in your ungodly lost state, and to be saved, means to turn to the living God.

Therefore, when you believe in Jesus Christ as the living God and all of His claims as Savior, you have repented. You have, in the nature of the case, made a change of mind and an about-face. Therefore, repentance unto salvation is impossible except as you believe in Christ as Savior – changing your mind about Him from your previous unsaved views which rejected His claim. That's the thing I'm driving at. If you get that straight, you're going to have something straight that a lot of Christians who have gone to church for many years have never been able to put together. Repentance has no emotional connotation as the Bible uses the word. It has the connotation of believing in Christ as Savior. In the process of believing, you have performed an act of repentance. You have changed your mind, and you have changed your allegiance.

**John the Baptizer**

This was further demonstrated (and we want to look at this now) in New Testament preaching. One of the first great preachers that comes on the scene as you come into the New Testament is John the Baptizer, and "repentance" was the key word in the preaching of John the Baptizer. He was calling the Jewish people to change their minds about their personal evil lifestyle to a positive volition toward the godliness which befitted the Messianic Kingdom. For many centuries, the Jews had awaited the coming of the Kingdom of the Messiah. Finally, John comes along, in fulfillment of prophecy, as the forerunner and the announcer that the kingdom is now at hand. Jesus Christ is about ready to begin His public ministry, and to present His credentials, and to identify and prove Himself as the Son of David who came to fulfill that mission of establishing the rule of Christ upon this earth. The messianic kingdom promised to the Jewish people in the Old Testament Scriptures was now at hand. The entrance to that kingdom was based upon an act of changing their minds toward their evil, and turning to Jesus Christ to whom John was pointing as the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world, and who came to establish that Messianic Kingdom. So, John says, "The kingdom is here. It's in your midst." "Repentance" was the key word – change your attitude about your evil, and turn to the godly principles that are befitting the Messianic Kingdom.

Therefore, in Matthew 3:1-2, we read, "In those days came John the Baptizer preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." There was the key word, and there was the reason. Drop down to verses 7 and 8: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to His baptism, he said unto them, 'Oh, generation of vipers. Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits befitting repentance.'" Here were the professors. Here were the imitators of religion. Here were the pretenders and the religious leaders. They were coming to John, and they were being baptized by him. But John realized that there was not a true genuine about-face on their part. He realized that they had not changed their minds toward Jesus Christ and toward His claims. And this was evidenced how? By the way they lived and what they were doing. Their lifestyle showed that there had not been an inward change. So, John called them a generation of vipers, and he told them to change their ways, and to produce the fruits that are befitting, and the evidence of repentance.

Drop down to verses 11 and 12 of Matthew 3: "I indeed baptized you with water unto repentance, but He who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire, whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor and gather His seed into the granary. But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Judgment was promised upon those who do not repent. John said, "My baptism is a symbol indicating your repentance (your change of mind and attitude) toward Jesus Christ, and toward the Messianic Kingdom that He has come to institute in our nation."

Luke, in writing the book of Acts, referred to this in Acts 19:4, when Luke is quoting Paul: "Then said Paul, 'John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who should come after him;'" that is, on Christ Jesus. So, what John the Baptizer was doing was pointing to Jesus and saying, "Change your mental attitude about Him. He is not just Joseph the carpenter's Son. He is not just a Galilean carpenter. He is indeed the very Son of God. He is very God of very God. And He has come to establish the promised kingdom made way back in the Abrahamic covenant which was made with our father Abraham, and expanded later in the Palestinian covenant; in the Davidic Covenant; and, in the New Covenant." All of these expanded the basic promise to Abraham that from him would come a man who would rule all the nations of the world in righteousness and in peace.

So, the message of John was very simply what? A call to an emotional response? Not at all. It was not a call to some kind of an expression of remorse over their sinfulness, but to a mental attitude of positive volition to the godliness that was inherently characteristic of the Messianic Kingdom.

Now, don't come up and ask me: What if they had believed? What if they had repented? What if they had really received Him? What would have happened to the price that had to be paid upon the cross for the sins of the world? What would have happened to the Lamb of God and the necessity to die for the sins of the world? ... I am sure that, in the providence of God, that that sacrifice would have been made in a suitable form so that the arrival of the Messianic Kingdom would not have been interrupted. All they had to do was say, "Yes, I changed my mind. I'm ready to accept the Savior. I'm ready to accept the principles of the Kingdom of God. I'm ready to go." They, of course, did not.

**The Preaching of Jesus**

The concept of repentance was further carried on in the preaching of Jesus and the apostles. Actually, they continued John the Baptist's call to repentance, and to return to the Word of God, and to the Messianic Kingdom lifestyle. They preached this same change of mind by sinners toward God, and to His standard of righteousness. We have this demonstrated in Matthew 4:17: "From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" This was the same message that John gave: "Change your mental outlook."

**The Preaching of the Apostles**

The apostles (His disciples), of course, that followed in the preaching ministry did the same thing. In Mark 6:12, we read, "The twelve, in going forth to preach, were described as going out, and they preached that men should repent." What did they ask people to do? Have some kind of an emotional response? Have some great sorrow for their sins? Have some great emotional reactions? No. What they asked them to do was to change their minds concerning Jesus Christ, and to express that in the lifestyle that they were going to live now as believers.

Later, the message of the apostles (after the day of Pentecost) was also, interestingly enough, summed up in the word "repent." It was natural that they should go from John the Baptist, to the preaching of Jesus, to the preaching of the disciples, and now into the church age. The same concept was there because the same principle still held true: Change your mental attitude. Change your mind about Jesus Christ, whom the Jewish leaders had murdered. That was the message now, after Pentecost, that Peter and the apostles preached. In Acts 2:38, therefore, we read, "And Peter said unto them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

Now, these are the very people (that Peter is speaking to) to whom (beginning in Act 2:22-23) he had this to say: "You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you as you yourselves also know." Jesus Christ came; He made claims to being the son of God; He made claims to being the fulfillment of the Messiah who had come to establish the kingdom; then He confirmed it by evidence; and, He had the credentials to prove it.

Verse 23: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain whom God had raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it," and so on. What is this saying? He's telling these people that, "Your leaders, with your approval, have taken Jesus Christ, and they have rejected Him as Messiah," as Jews reject him all over the world today. "And you delivered Him up to be murdered, but God reversed what you did out of your evil. He brought payment for the sins of the world, but he brought Christ back to life. You have had a wrong attitude toward Jesus Christ," he was telling these people. "And I call upon you to repent, and to turn to Jesus Christ, and to change your mental attitude; change your viewpoint; and, change your mind about Him. That's what it was all about.

So the word "repent," of course, very fittingly applied here. But again, I must remind you that that repentance was not that they should tear their clothes in Jewish style to express their grief; that they should beat their breasts; and, that they should throw ashes upon their head, but that they should simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. It was a mental factor that they were being called upon to exercise.

In Acts 3:18-19, this apostolic message is again set forth: "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. The times of refreshing that he's speaking of there refers to the millennial times of reflection. This is the millennium that they're talking about. That is the time of refreshing that the Jews for centuries have been looking forward to.

Verse 20: "And He shall send Jesus Christ who, before you, was preached unto you." Here again the message is, "Repent." Let's back up and read verse 18: "But those things which God before has shown by the mouth of all His prophets that Christ should suffer, He has so fulfilled." That is the message of Jesus Christ. Then verse 20 goes on and says, "Repent, therefore, and be converted." Change your mind about Jesus Christ, because He fulfilled the plan of God.

So, repentance toward Jesus Christ was the message they preached. And, in time, this message was not only delivered to Jews. In the church age, it was finally expanded to the gentiles. In Acts 11:18, when Peter is discussing what had happened in the home of Cornelius in Joppa, he had explained to them how the Holy Spirit had fallen upon them. Those who listened, therefore, made this conclusion: "When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God saying, "Then has God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life." What did he grant to them? Sorrow for their sins? No. He granted the gentiles the capacity and the right to change their minds concerning Jesus Christ, and to accept Him as Savior, even as had been extended some seven years previously on the Day of Pentecost to the Jews.

Paul preached repentance toward Jesus Christ everywhere he went in the gentile world. This was the message that he gave on Mars Hill in the city of Athens. What is the key concept in Paul's message to these intelligent, thoughtful, educated pagan philosophers? Acts 17:30-31: "And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commanded all men everywhere to repent." There is the message again. "Because He has appointed the day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained, concerning which He had given assurance unto all men in that He had raised Him from the dead.

So, what was the message to the pagan philosophers? It was the same message: Change your mind about Jesus Christ. Here is the evidence. Here is the truth about Him. What you are required to do if you wish to have eternal life is to change your thinking and your attitude toward Jesus Christ. Paul's message for all mankind is summed up in Acts 20:21: "Testifying both to the Jews and also to the gentiles: repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." You'll notice there that in that verse, he combines repentance with faith in God. Repentance is part of faith in God. Faith in God means believing in Jesus Christ. That is the combination. Believing produces repentance.

**Christ's Sacrifice and Resurrection**

The preaching of repentance, therefore, must always be directed toward the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the fact of His resurrection. That is what's missing in a lot of evangelistic preaching today. It somehow talks about repentance from all your bad habits and your evil ways, but it fails to properly associate that in the minds of people with the sacrifice of Christ.

Luke 24:44-49 illustrate this: "And He said unto them." Here are the words of Jesus Himself (the final words). "'These are the words which I spoke unto while I was yet with you: that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me.' Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send you the promise of My Father upon you. But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high.'"

I think that this is really fantastic. Here is this verse telling us that the final words of Jesus Christ, in His final moments with His disciples (His followers on this earth before He went back to heaven), were spent in running a Bible class. Of all the things: they could have sat there and reminisced about the old days; the terrific times they had; and, all the ministries they shared, He sits and He runs one more formal Bible class for them. He turns to the Word of God (the Old Testament Scriptures), and He opens their understanding so that they could understand what the Scriptures were saying. It's possible to read the Bible and not understand what in the world it's saying. You may have had that experience sometime yourself – to read the Bible and not know what on earth it is saying. That is not God's norm. It is possible, through the Spirit of God and through the exercise of the teaching gift (of the expository gift of teaching the Word of God), for you to understand the Scriptures. What He had to say about Himself was drawn from the Word of God, and the key concept was repentance.

There's nothing wrong in calling upon people to repent providing that they understand what that word means. It is not a good word to use in witnessing simply because it's so corrupted in our society. It is so corrupted by our religious community in terms of an emotional response that you can hardly use the word and convey a proper concept – that it is a mental change of viewpoint.

**Remorse**

Now, having said that, we must recognize that while the feeling of remorse for one's sins is not repentance, nevertheless that feeling of remorse can play a role of leading us to a change of mind concerning our evil, and of turning to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 illustrate this. Paul says, "Now I do not rejoice that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance. For you were made sorry after a godly manner, that you might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow (sorrow which is bestirred – an emotional remorse which is bestirred by God the Holy Spirit) works repentance to salvation, not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world works death." What is the sorrow of the world? That's the opposite thing we've been talking about: all the emotional guff; all the tears; all the sorrow; and, all the breast-beating. That is the sorrow of the world. That leads you to death. Here it is very clear that the sorrow that the Holy Spirit leads you to will be a remorse; a regret; and, a revulsion toward yourself in terms of your sin that will then change your mind toward that sin, and will change your mind toward God's standard of righteousness, toward which you will then become positive.

That's the whole point. Genuine repentance is a change of mind toward the evil that you have been practicing, and the result of that change is godly conduct. Acts 26:20 declares that very thing: "But showed first unto them at Damascus and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the borders of Judea, then to the gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God, and do works fit for repentance." That's the order. You repent by believing (accepting) God's doctrinal standards. Therefore, in that change of mind, you turn to God and the result is works which are compatible with repentance.

God's punishment concerning evil is certain. There can be no question about that. But His grace gives time for the exercise of repentance. His grace always gives time to change your mind before there is judgment (before there is discipline), and I don't care how gross you may consider the sin. Before there is punishment and before there is divine discipline, there is opportunity of grace to back out. That's one of the greatest wonderful qualities of grace you never want to forget. There is always an opportunity to back out and to escape the judgment.

2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God wants us to repent. He wants us to change our minds and to straighten out. However, because He takes time to bring judgment, you might misinterpret what He's doing, and you might think that that's an indication that He is not going to bring judgment; that you are going to get away with your evil; and, that repentance is not all that important.

So, therefore, be careful that you do not fall into the class of people who are stubbornly adhering to an attitude of negative volition to Bible doctrine – refusing to repent of your evil. That is what we have here on several occasions in the book of the Revelation. We have classic examples of people who will not repent. What are they doing? They will not change their minds toward their evil and toward the standards that God requires and demands of us.

Notice Revelation 9:20-21: "And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues, yet did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which neither can see nor hear nor walk; neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." Here the statement is very clear. This is talking about a lifestyle of corruption and evil. Here are these people out in the tribulation. God is pouring judgment upon this earth, and they know where it's coming from. But do they repent? Do they do what? Do they change their minds toward their idols? No. They still call these idols that they have made their gods. They still say that these are the forces that control the world and that control nature. So, they continue to give their allegiance to these gods. They will not change their minds and say, "No, there is the true god – the One up there that's bringing these things upon us. Do they change their minds concerning their evil lifestyle? No. They continue with their thefts. They continue with their immoralities and their fornication. They continue with their sorceries and the association of drugs that's involved in that word. So, there are people who stubbornly refuse to repent.

**Repentance is the Way of Life for the Christian**

At this point. I should interject and remind you that repentance sums up the way of life of a Christian. While we may not be in such horrid sins as this, we are constantly faced with a moment-by-moment repentance of a human viewpoint outlook and changing that – turning about to a divine viewpoint outlook. That is what gives us progress in the Christian life.

Notice Revelation 16:9, which is another example of stubborn refusal to repent: "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent to give Him glory." Here they know who is doing these things. Here they know that this is the living God who is doing these things. And what do they do? They swear at Him; they curse at Him; they blaspheme His name; and, they refuse to give Him glory for the power that He is exercising, and to recognize Him as the God of Gods. Verse 11: "And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds." That's very clear. That is stubborn, willful refusal to do what? To get emotional? No, to change their minds. If you understand what repentance means, the passage is very clear.

One of the things that should lead and does lead people to repentance is declared for us in Romans 2:4. This is a very winsome appeal on the part of our God. It is His goodness; His kindness; and His throwing coals of fire upon our heads by the kindness with which He surrounds us, and the grace in which He treats us: "For you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance. That's a good principle. There is a point of doctrine there to remember in application. Treating a person that needs repentance in kindness and in goodness and in longsuffering and in forbearance is a way to lead them, indeed, to change their mental attitude and their outlook.

One of the things you have to remember about repentance unto salvation is that it is a gift from God. That's one of the serious things about treating it in a contemptuous way. You do not just repent because you say, "Well, I'm going to repent and be saved." Repentance (changing your mind concerning Jesus Christ) is a gift from God. It's a calling. It's a choosing from God. Acts 5:31 indicates this: "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." God gives the very repentance to Israel. He gave that repentance that they needed, and which they so often refused then to exercise.

In Acts 11:18, we have the same principle: "When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God saying, "Then has God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life." God gives repentance to the Jewish people, and He gave repentance to the gentile people. In Romans 2:4, we have the same principle again declared – that repentance is something that God provides us with so that it's available to use: "For despise you all the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance." This is the verse we had a moment ago – God leading to repentance.

We have one more in 2 Timothy 2:25 which presents this same concept: "In meekness, instructing those that oppose them, if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." This is even where you are dealing with outright rebellious resisters: the guys who are the slobs; the guys who are the punks; and, the guys who are the rebels against righteousness; against opportunity; and, against all decent treatment. The principle here is what? The principle again is to recognize that God can bring a change of mind. That's what repentance is. It is a change of inward attitude. That is the way you should pray: "God, give this person a change of mind. Give this person a change of mental attitude."

2 Timothy 2:25 declares that so beautifully: "Take an attitude of meekness while you instruct those who oppose them" (that is, God's teachings), if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

In the nature of the case, repentance obviously always includes turning back to God. Everything else is evil; everything else is wrong; and, everything else is human viewpoint. When you turn from that, the only place you can turn is to God. Acts 26:20 says again (that verse that we had a moment ago), "Showed first to them of Damascus and Jerusalem, throughout all the borders of Judea, and to the gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God." If you repent, it is, in the nature of the case, turning to God.

In Matthew 9:13, Jesus identified those who need to repent as those who are sinners. That is why repentance is necessary: "But go and learn what that means. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So, repentance means a change of mind about your wrongdoing, and that's why you need it.

**Repentance and the Christian**

For Christians, this principle also applies. We must stress that again. Believers out of temporal fellowship are to repent of their evil and go positive to the will of God. The confession that is declared in 1 John 1:9, that we all know so well, is in fact an expression of personal repentance. If we confess our sins, that act of confession that 1 John 1:9 refers to, is an expression of personal repentance. You will not admit your sin; you will not confess that sin; and, you will not bring that to the Father in genuineness unless you have changed your mind about your evil, and unless you have changed your mental outlook about the evil that the Spirit of God has placed upon your heart, and of which He is convicting you. Repentance in the Christian deals with a change of mind toward some area of reversionism, therefore, into which he has slipped. Repentance is the means by which a believer goes from carnality to spirituality; from spiritual immaturity to super grace maturity; and, from human viewpoint to divine viewpoint thinking. Repentance is at the heart of the Christian way of life. It is the constant changing from this world (from its evil) to God and to His righteousness. This change of mental attitude in the Christian results from his positive response to the doctrine which he has in his mind.

**Motivations for Repentance**

Let me sum this up with motivations for repentance. There are motivations for repentance that actually results in false repentance.

1. **Human Fear**

You may be motivated to repentance out of human fear. Human fear of the consequences for the penalty for some evil conduct will lead some people to what they might consider to be repentance. This, however, does not involve a change of mind toward the evil conduct. The evil conduct is not disapproved. The evil conduct is not rejected. They're just afraid of consequences of pursuing that particular evil conduct any further. What this results in is human effort (willpower to resist the evil), but it usually ends in despair. This has a strange quality to it. Even where human fear seeks to bring a person to where they want to change their mind and their outlook, the old sin nature is not capable of doing that kind of repenting. The result is that it ends in despair as they fall back into that evil.

1. **The Recognition of the Divine Standard**

The second kind of direction for repentance is the recognition of the divine standard. That is, the person recognizes that what he is doing is condemned by God. There is a divine standard that condemns the particular evil act that he's engaged in. So, what does he do? He seeks to place this evil in a dignified light. That is what is commonly done in our society today toward what is called adult entertainment, for example, or adult lifestyles, for example. All of the things that are covered by the word "adult" is an attempt to dignify evil by people who feel there should be a change, and that they are faced with a divine standard of condemnation. Even if they dismiss the Bible, and even if they don't have much use for Christianity in churches, the Bible still works upon that conscience, and what God declares as His standard bothers people. So, they seek to place a dignified light upon their evil. So they put on, and they seek freedom from the guilt by self-improvement and character development. The result of this is sophisticated corruption.

I happened to be catching a little piece of a television program the other day, and it was an Academy Awards, but it was an Academy Awards for pornographic stars. It was quite pathetic to see these very expensive cars drive up before this theater. Everything was glittering and everybody was standing around just like they do for the Hollywood stars. Then they had these personalities, one-by-one, who are in pornographic movies, step out and receive the applause. The lights are flashing, and the interviews are being carried on. They are dressed very nicely. They look very attractive. They obviously were people of wealth. Some of them even exuded a certain degree of culture. What do you have here? You have people trying to cover up their evil with a corrupt sophistication. I've seen it so many times. They try to cover up the divine standard that bothers them with a sophistication. That is not any truer repentance than that which comes from human fear that tries to avoid the consequences.

1. **The Conviction of God the Holy Spirit**

Then there is a third motivation for repentance, and that is the conviction of God the Holy Spirit. In this case, the person admits his personal moral guilt. He admits his negative volition attitudes. He responds with an about-face – a change of mind with positive volition to Bible doctrine. The result is a change of mind which is expressed as faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation, or faith in doctrine unto restoration to temporal fellowship through confession of sin.

So, there is a lot of false repentance which flows from human fear that tries to avoid the consequences, and people pretend that they're repenting of their ways; or, recognizing the divine standard, and so trying to place a sophistication upon their moral corruption, and thus pretending that they have repented. Or there is true and genuine repentance, which admits what God the Holy Spirit is saying to us, and which turns from evil and faces the true and living God.

The quality of repentance is at the core of what the unbeliever needs in changing his mind toward Jesus Christ and coming into eternal life. It is at the heart of our day-by-day walk with God the Holy Spirit. Repentance is changing your mind from your dead works and turning to the living God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)