

## The First Received Prayer (“*Metanoia*” - Repentance, or “*Metanoeo*” - Repent) and the Bible

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Sin forms a barrier between man and God. Each sin is woven into an impregnable veil - and it becomes a bit thicker with each passing day. “*Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God ... so that He does not hear*” (Isa 59:2). Prayers either hit it and bounce straight back, or else ascend into this morass and become hopelessly entangled. However, there is one prayer that destroys this barrier.

### The First Prayer - “*Metanoia*” / “*Metanoeo*”

The prayer that demolishes this barrier - the first prayer God receives from an individual - is the powerful prayer of “*metanoia*” / “*metanoeo*.” It is commonly translated, “*repentance*” (the noun, “*metanoia*”) or “*repent*” (the verb, “*metanoeo*”). So, what is the content of that prayer? This is an exceedingly important matter as the removal of one’s sin barrier is the difference between eternal life and eternal death. This is worth ... attention.

“*Metanoia*” is a compound Koine Greek word, “*meta + noia*” - a preposition and noun. It literally means, “*after mind*.” It is a “*change of mind*.” “*Metanoeo*” is “*meta + noeo*” - a preposition and a verb. It is “*an after perception - a change in perception*.” One reassesses, and then abandons, some previously held position. Unfortunately, three words are usually welded to these words when they are expounded upon ... “**from your sins**.” But, these Greek words have nothing to do with “*sins*.” This “*change of mind or perception*” can be about anything - and toward anything. **Context** determines what is abandoned and what new conclusion is embraced.

Having said this, I am the first to acknowledge that calls from God to a “*change of mind*” are, technically, calls from sin to righteousness. But, the focus of that “*change of mind*” is often something other than **one’s particular personal misdeeds** (what we normally think of as “*our sins*”). The best way to demonstrate this is to replace the word, “*repentance*” or “*repent*” with “*change of mind*” or “*change of perception*” (or some close rendering, making the passage readable - often inserting the hidden pronoun, “*your*,” “*their*,” etc., where appropriate). So, let’s go through all uses of “*metanoia*” (n) and “*metanoeo*” (v) and see how each one reads. I will also add the word, “*perception*” to each use of the verb.

So, ... I am calling you to “*change your mind*” about the meaning of “*metanoia*” and “*metanoeo*”! Do not insert “*from your sins*” into their meaning! Let them stand properly and discover what God is calling the hearer/reader to change his/her mind about! Repent, my reader!

The placement of the passages in the various categories below are open to modification. I look forward to your thoughts on why some should be moved. With study of your points, and some reflection, its quite possible, “*metanaso*” (future of “*metanoeo*”) - I will change my mind.

### A Change of Mind - Open Ended Calls

These passages do not define what new conclusion is to be embraced. That does not mean there isn’t one. God does not call for a “*change of mind*” ... to then embrace a void. I believe these are purposeful “*open ended*” calls. The reason for such ambiguity will be discussed

in the section following the read through of all these passages.

*“And (the disciples) went out and preached that men should change their mind/perception”* (Mk 6:12).

*“God is now declaring to men, that all everywhere should change their mind/perception”* (Ac 17:30). Paul was preaching Jesus and the resurrection, but also discussing their idols, etc.

*“(Jesus) is the One whom God exalted to His right hand as a Chief and Savior, to grant a change of mind to Israel, indeed, forgiveness of sins”* (Ac 5: 31). This may be an emphatic use of “kai” meaning, “indeed.” I will discuss the connector “kai” more in a moment.

*“Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the change of mind that leads to life”* (Ac 11:18).

*“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to a changed mind?”* (Ro 2:4).

*“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to a changed mind”* (2Pet 3:9).

*“... but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will change their mind/perception”* (Lk 16:30). If the rich man’s five living brothers would see the beggar Lazarus rise from the dead, then they would believe God’s claims about anything and everything! Abraham said (paraphrased), “No, ... they wouldn’t.”

*“For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a change of mind **without regret**, leading to salvation”* (2Cor 7:10). In its context, this statement had the Corinthian sin situation (a son “having” his father’s wife) as its catalyst. But, I think this comment has much broader implication - and application - than this particular situation. I will comment more on this passage at the end of this document.

### **Likely Open Ended Calls**

*“Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that a changed mind for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations ...”* (Lk 24:46,47). But, this may be just a direct reference to believing the gospel. It probably is.

*“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who changes his/her mind/perception”* (Lk 15:10). This may be in reference to personal misdeeds - but the fact that everyone is a “sinner” is a given. So, this might be a description ... more than an indictment.

*“Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not change their mind/perception”* (Mt 11:20). The miracles validated His message was from God. So, this is an indictment that they did not believe - whatever He had declared among them. Jesus taught on a lot more than just one’s personal misdeeds.

*“ ... if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have changed their mind/perception long ago (and sat) in sackcloth and ashes”* (Mt 11:21 and Lk 10:13). They would have yielded to all His message. The sackcloth and ashes may be grief over personal sins (like Nineveh at Jonah’s preaching), but unbelief, when recognized as saying God has lied - or has been in error in His proclamations - can produce this reaction too ... when *“metanoia”* occurs.

*“Change your mind/perception, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Mt 4:17). Jesus does not define what specific subject is addressed. He states **the reason** for this change of mind, but not the specific subject matter. This is also the exact wording of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:2. I have placed all of John’s material together further down - and will explain why there.

### **A Change of Mind About Outside Matters - Some External Subject**

In Koine Greek, the conjunction *“kai”* is often a simple connector between independent phrases. But, it is also commonly used as an ascensive - meaning, *“even.”* That means the phrase following *“kai”* builds upon the first phrase. But I think, in many of the following passages, a case could be made for understanding *“kai”* **as emphatic** ... even stronger than merely ascensive ... and translated by, *“indeed, really, in fact.”* I will place the translation choice for *“kai”* in parentheses below. Know that **any** choice is linguistically legal (*“and,” “even,” “indeed,” “really,”* or *“in fact”*). Translators make their call based upon context, the author’s common use of a word, etc. That is why translating from one language to another is an art as well as a science.

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: change your mind/perception, (indeed) believe in the gospel”* (Mk 1:15). I am not sure this was yet the full gospel message of 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, but who knows ... it might have been. Jesus did know it.

*“But, the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that the Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Change your mind/perception therefore (indeed) return, so that your sins may be wiped away ...”* (Ac 3:18,19).

*“Change your mind/perception, (and) let each of you be baptized ...”* (Ac 2:38). This follows a tremendous declaration about who Jesus was and is - and what those listening Jews had done to Him. The call was to change their mind about Him.

*“Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should change their mind/perception,*

*(indeed) turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to this change of mind” (Ac 26:19,20).*

*“I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publically and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of a change of mind toward God, (in fact) faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ac 20:21).*

*“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and change your mind/perception, (indeed) do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lamp stand out of its place - unless you change your mind/perception” (Rev 2:5).*

*“I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to a changed mind” (2Cor 7:9). Most believe this was a congregational change of mind of tolerating an individual who had taken his father’s wife ... as wife? A step mother probably (1Cor 5 - whole chapter). Paul was appalled by this errant “tolerance.” They changed their minds about that being okay.*

*“For in the case of those who have once been enlightened ... and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to a changed mind, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame” (Heb 6:4,6). God has little patience - maybe none - with double-mindedness on this matter. “But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us ... was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes” (2Cor 1:18-20). For one to declare, “Jesus is the answer!” - to then later say, “But then again, ... maybe not” - friend, these are exceedingly dangerous waters. Go slow, dig deep, count the cost, and emerge **with convictions** ... not “beliefs.”*

*“For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for (Esau) found no place for a change in mind (from his father, Isaac), though he sought it with tears” (Heb 12:17). This is a unique use of “metanoia” - man to man. Do you see how “from your sins” **cannot** be part of this word’s meaning?*

*“You also have some who ... hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Change your mind/perception therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth” (Rev 2:16). Whatever that teaching was ... well, it was fire in one’s hands. I hope they dropped it before His “visit.”*

*“Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and change your mind/perception” (Rev 3:3) ... about adopting contrary-to-God information and positions.*

*“I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and*

*discipline; Be zealous therefore and change your mind/perception” (Rev 3:19) ... about being rich. They thought they were rich - in more than just money. But, Jesus ... corrected the record.*

*“And men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the Name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not change their mind/perception, so as to give Him glory” (Rev 16:9). The word, “glory” could be translated, “honor.” To be sure, this is personal sin - but it is more omission than commission.*

*“... with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them to a change of mind leading to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti 2:25). This can be applied to myriads of areas, but I did not place it in the open end category as it does identify the target - “the truth.” But, this is as open ended a call as one can imagine because it can embrace **any** subject matter. And, as we all know, all changes in mind, authored by God, end in “the truth.”*

*“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of a changed mind from dead works ...” (Heb 6:1). Are dead works limited to personal misdeeds? Can it not include one’s entire career thrust, or humanitarian efforts outside of Christ? “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me - scatters” (Lk 12:30). All “building” outside of Him will be burned up ( 1Cor 3:10-15). The materials are all dead wood, hay or straw - kindling.*

### **A Change of Mind About a Inside Matters - Personal Misdeeds**

*“Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you change your mind/perception, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you change your mind/perception, you will all likewise perish” (Lk 13:2-5).*

*“And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I changed my mind/perception,’ forgive him” (Lk 17:4).*

*“Change your mind/perception of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you” (Ac 8:22). Simon the Sorcerer had offered money to the apostles so he too could have authority to impart the Holy Spirit to others.*

*“And they gnawed their tongues because of the pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not change their mind/perception about their deeds” (Rev 16:10,11).*

*“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to a changed mind” (Lk 5:32).*

*“There will be more joy in heaven over the sinner who changes his/her mind/perception than*

*over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no change of mind” (Lk 15:7).*

*“I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not changed their mind/perception about the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced” (2Cor 12:21).*

*“The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they changed their mind/perception at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (Mt 12:41 and Lk 11:32). The king of Nineveh called upon all to “turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands” (Jonah 3:8).*

*“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he changes his mind/perception, forgive him” (Lk 17:3).*

*“... you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to change her mind/perception; but she does not want to change her mind/perception of her immorality. Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they change their mind/perception about her deeds” (Rev 2:21,22). Because of the reference to idols, all this may be about spiritual adultery - like James 4:4.*

*“And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not change their mind/perception about the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not change their minds/perceptions about their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts” (Rev 9:20,21).*

### **John, the Baptizer’s, Calls to “Metanoia” / “Metanoeo”**

Quite honestly, I do not fully understand the Bible’s materials on the subject of baptism. I am not saying I know nothing about this subject - and I probably need to write an article exposing what I know to be erroneous teaching. But starting right here, with John, what is an *“immersion of repentance - an immersion of a changed mind?”* Even if one errantly adds, *“from your sins,”* the phrase - and concept - still makes no sense to me. Maybe I am suffering from some sort of *“brain cloud.”* Seriously, what is personally interesting to me is my attitude about such a confession. I am confident the problem is with **my** understanding of the material - not the material. If I understood Jewish history and tradition at that time, or understood the words better, or just had my mind opened by the Christ so as to *“understand the scriptures”* (Lk24:45), then, I would get it. But currently, Paul’s statement comes closest to helping me *“get”* John’s activity.

*“And Paul said, ‘John baptized with a baptism of a change of mind, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus’” (Ac 19:4). To totally believe in Christ -*

being fully immersed in that - well, I get that. The water would represent a spiritual truth. At least, ... I think I got it. But, as you will see, I go downhill from here.

*“John, the baptizer, appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of a changed mind for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4).*

*“And (John) came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of a changed mind for the forgiveness of sins” (Lk 3:3).*

*“As for me, I baptize you with water for a change of mind ...” (Mt 3:11).*

*“You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with your change of mind” (Mt 3:7,8 and Lk 3:8).*

*“John had proclaimed before (Jesus’) coming, a baptism of a changed mind to all the people of Israel” (Ac 13:24). So, a change after Jesus’ coming? But, Jesus’ initial proclamation ( Mt 4:17) was identical to this next verse - by John. Anyway, ....*

*“Change your mind/perception for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 3:2). This is a somewhat open call. One is told **why** to change his/her mind - but not the specific subject(s) to be changed.*

### **Why the Open Ended Call: Changes of Mind - Leading to the First Received Prayer**

I ask for your careful intention on this next section. In many ways, it is the heart of this matter. I will recount my own journey of repentances - *“changes of mind” (plural)* - that culminated in the ultimate *“change of mind”* leading to my first received prayer. This will serve as an example.

About a year before I became a Christian, I had a dream. For years, I had been struggling with the injustices this world produces. In this dream, I was sitting, looking down, and in frustration said, *“This shouldn’t be like this, **it should be like this!** And this shouldn’t be like this, **it should be like this!**”* There was someone sitting beside me, just a little higher. His face was a blur, but he was totally friendly. He never said anything, but I could sense a benevolent, calm agreement with each assertion. *“And this shouldn’t be like this, **it should be like this!** And this shouldn’t be like this, **it should be like this!**”* This *“friend”* continued his silent, but full, assent. I continued my contentions ... until all complaints were exhausted. Then, after a momentary pause, I sighed deeply, my body sagged, and I concluded, *“But, ... that’s just not the way it is.”* With that, ... my dream ended. The next morning, I was different. I no longer believed justice would be found, or attained, in this life. Even though a disappointing determination, I had a strange sense of peace. That reassuring, friendly presence beside me - made me feel like I was not really all alone. I wrote this dream down and then continued my life journey ... with this altered mind.

About a year after I became a Christian, I was looking through my old notes. I then read the entry about that dream. As I read it, the importance of that change of mind - at that time -

flooded me. My response was immediate, “*Lord, that friend ... was You!*” I am confident He will affirm this suspicion when I appear before Him. That change of mind was not the ultimate one, but it was an important one as it helped me abandon a dead end road.

Sometime after that dream, I experienced another important pre-Christian “*change of mind.*” It involved ... pollution. Man’s careless pollution of this phenomenal environment weighed heavily on me. I cannot describe the anger and frustration wrought in me the more I learned of man’s recklessness. I had just begun reading the Bible (for some reason starting with The Revelation) and came across this statement: “*Thy wrath came ... to destroy those who destroy the earth*” (Rev 11:18). That arrested me. I thought, “*If He made all this, wouldn’t pollution anger Him?*” I read the verse again. This opened my mind an entirely different option on how this issue would be handled. My mind changed - and a huge weight lifted. Polluters will not escape ... the Creator of the earth. That passage created a great desire to learn more of the Bible’s contents.

Not long after that, I read Job 28. That chapter discusses man, and all his pursuits, mentally and physically. Then comes two questions. “*But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living*” (Job 28:12,13). The chapter then recounts more of man’s search for the real substance of life - with no results. Then this declaration: “*God understands (wisdom’s) way and He knows its place .... And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding’*” (Job 28:23,28). Proverbs 9:10 refines this even more: “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*” That chapter (and all the parts I did not quote here) concluded the matter for me. **Man did not have the answers to life.** This chapter confronted my growing suspicion of man’s limitations and then stated, in a matter-of-fact manner, where such information resided. I still did not know what the answers were, but I knew **Who** had them. I wanted in. At that moment, everything in me pointed **due north** - toward “*Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King*” (Ps 48:2). With this “*change of mind,*” I totally abandoned man as the source for wisdom on the substantive issues of life. I resolved to search for “**God**” - whoever, whatever or wherever He was. This was a critical turning point - a total change of mind - a phenomenally momentous act of repentance. But, I still had not arrived at that first received prayer - that most powerful change of mind ... the mother load. Incidentally, thirty plus years later, everything in me still points due north because “*all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” are hidden in “*God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself*” (Col 2:2,3). I am now in ... but, I want more ... and more ... and more ... and more ....

Well, after that Job 28 internal about-face, a series of “*changes in mind*” unfolded over the next two months. They led to this declaration ... to the woman I was living with, “*There are only two things I know for sure; Satan is real, and I am going to Hell forever. I’m quitting my job, and you can have everything ... I have to sit here and read this Book!*” ... which I did. This phenomenal change of mind occurred six weeks prior to reaching the ultimate “*change of mind*” - the target. And in that six week period, numerous other changes in my mind occurred - too many to recount here. But, I was getting ever closer to the mother load.

### **The Point of This Recitation**

I needed my mind changed on a whole host of issues before I could arrive at that **one**

change of mind that destroyed sin's barrier over me. The reason many of God's calls to repentance are open ended is because each person has a different set of issues that must be confronted before arriving at the big "*change of mind.*" **You** might not need your mind changed about hoping for - and even expecting - equity, justice and fairness in this life. I did. **You** might not need a change of mind on the issue of world pollution. I did. **You** might not need a change of mind on sexual activity. I did. But one thing I do know. Everyone outside of Christ ... **needs a mind overhaul.** To the saints He says, "*you were formally alienated and hostile in mind*" and indulged in "*the desires ... of the mind, and were, by nature, wrathful children, even as the rest*" (Col 1:21 and Eph 2:3). Not too flattering. God, in His infinite wisdom, knows exactly what thinking needs confronted - in what order - and at what time - to bring down an alienated, hostile mind. Fortunately, "*a smoldering wick He will not put out*" (Mt 12:20). He relights one's mind ... with a different fuel.

**You Ask: "So, what do I need to change my mind about?"**

I don't know. Let me throw out some possibilities. Maybe you need to ...

- Change your mind about blaming God for some ill that has befallen you. That can be a tough one (Pr 20:24).
- Change your mind about your approach to your Creator and your "*rights*" before Him (Heb 10:19,20).
- Change your mind about God's ownership claim to everything under the heavens - including your money, your possessions, your abilities, your business, your health ... your soul (Job 41:11).
- Change your mind about being a self-made success. If you allow Him, He will remind you of those "*lucky breaks*" - and what unseen Hand was behind them. "*You would have no authority ... unless it had been granted you from above*" (Jn 19:11).
- Change your mind about previous escapes from death (Ps 68:20). I always credited, "*my lucky star.*" What an idiot.
- Change your mind as to the perilousness of your situation (Heb 10:31).

I do not know what areas you need confronted on - but He does. You can always ask Him ... like the rich young ruler did (Mt 19:16-22). He will respond. He will confront you with your particular point of insanity and call you to change your mind. All this will be a precursor to ...

**The Big "Change of Mind" - The Ultimate "Metanoia" / "Metanoeo"**

Paul was commissioned to solemnly testify "*to both Jews and Greeks of a change of mind toward God, (indeed) faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Ac 20:21 - an emphatic "*kai*"). The ultimate "*change of mind*" **is for one to believe the testimony of the Father about the Son -**

His person (God in the flesh), His life (no sin), His purpose (to die for ours), and His resurrection (that He physically walked out of the tomb alive and appeared to hundreds of people over a forty day period before ascending off this globe into heaven, [1Cor 15:1-11]). One is called to change his/her mind about the gospel message. Even John, the baptizer, prior to the cross, was “*telling the people to believe ... in Jesus*” (Ac 19:4). **This** is the mother load.

### **The Powerful Prayer of “*Metanoia*” / “*Metanoeo*”**

When an individual finally arrives at this prayer, an eternal transaction occurs. Here is a partial list of God’s action in response to this prayer.

- The blood of Christ is applied for “*the forgiveness of our trespasses*” (Eph 1:7).
- The righteousness of Christ becomes “*our righteousness*” (Jer 23:6 and Ro 3:21).
- One is “*delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred ... into the Kingdom of the beloved Son*” (Col 1:13).
- One is given ... eternal life (Jn 3:15,16,35 and Jn 10:28, etc.).
- One is made a Royal Priest (1Pet 2:9).
- One is given the Holy Spirit - thus becoming a temple of God (Ro 8:9 and 2Cor 6:16).
- The granting of spiritual gifts probably occurs at that moment (1Cor 12:11).
- One is adopted as a son /daughter in His family with an untold inheritance - even though I am trying to tell some of it! (Ro 8:15-17 and 32).
- An immortal body is guaranteed (1Cor 15:50-54).
- A place in the new heavens and earth is being prepared (Jn 14:2).
- Eternally substantive work is created for one in this age. Thus, real purpose for this life is granted and predetermined ( Eph 2:10).
- Access to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (hidden in Christ) are now available to the believer (Col 2:3).
- Angelic beings are assigned to assist the believer (Heb 1:14).

This is a very incomplete list. But, even a completed one ... is just fall-out. To be sure, this is ***incredible*** fall-out, but these are just particles descending from ... **a nuclear explosion.**

***“There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God ...”***

*... when a sinner changes his/her mind/perception.*” Now, stop everything ... and for a moment, reflect on what this passage is saying. It is God **Himself** who is rejoicing. When you rejoice - **really rejoice** - the outburst of energy stuns everyone in its path. There is no way to know the power that bursts in the corridors of eternity when our Creator rejoices over one lowly little sinner ... who changes his/her mind - repents - and believes Him. It is a nuclear explosion ... creating an eternal destiny. All the benefits in the list above, are gifts - showered directly from His Hands in response to this prayer. How any other prayer will ever accomplish more than this one ... well, I just don't see it.

**A Tree in the Forest**

One of the most marvelous things about God is the stealth and humility He so often exhibits. This first prayer is usually a very simple, private, relatively quiet affair ... on this side. The publican *“was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’”* Jesus informs us, *“This man went down to his house justified”* - right with God (Lk 18:13,14). It is highly doubtful that publican had any idea what just occurred ... on the other side. When the thief on the cross said, *“Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”* (Lk 23:42), no one else around may have taken much notice. They did not observe anything out of the ordinary with that exchange. In fact, a few hours later, the guards came and broke his legs to speed his death - and then unceremoniously dumped his broken corpse. While I am confident the thief did experience some internal assistance in meeting his *“end,”* there is no way he himself knew the eternal eruptions set off by his changed mind. He was ... preoccupied. Of course, the angels witnessed an entirely different display. Incidentally, there is no way that nameless thief could know how his faith would impact a man two thousand years later on the opposite side of the globe ... me. God is still using him here and now. And speaking of me, when I finally bowed under all the pressure, alone in my living room, and asked the Lord to come into my life, I didn't sense **anything** out of the ordinary at that moment. I had no idea of the massive power of that prayer ... and of the eruption of activity that occurred in the presence of God's angels. God is extremely humble about the immensity - and intensity - of His reaction in our presence ... at present. Oh, as a philosophic aside, just because those in this age do not hear this explosion of God - does not mean it does not happen. If a tree falls in the forest, with no man around to hear it - the power and the crashing noise is still fully present. For man to think otherwise is a display of insanity, arrogance and stupidity. Man's perception of reality has no effect upon reality. That is genuine Philosophy 101.

**No Regret**

God always leads one into *“a change of mind without regret”* (2Cor 7:10). There is not one change of mind, authored by God, I have ever regretted. In fact, here is an interesting *“change of mind.”* Initially, I fought most of them until I finally broke under the weight of truth. But years later - when lucid and thinking sanely - I long for God to challenge my errant positions and change my mind to agree with His. *“I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved”* ( Hab 2:1). The choice is to continue being set free from the narrow-minded darkness

of man and Satan ... or not. This process is achieved by fully understanding man's position on the particular issue, then analyzing it from God's perspective, and then abandoning it ... with the ability to refute it by forwarding God's position with its heavier weights. To enter into such a place on some specific issue is an exercise of inexpressible privilege and honor. It is my hope God will see fit to continue this unmerited favor toward me. "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,*' declares the Lord. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isa 55:8,9).

But, in His normal humility, all of these changes in mind do more than just produce ... no regret. They produce thanks. They produce allegiance. They produce worship. I will never be able to fully demonstrate my gratitude for His patience and commitment to bring me out of the hell hole of my natural mind. I am glad He has granted me eternity ... to try.

### **An Unfortunate Question - "Does Repentance Come Before Believing?"**

This question is built upon the false notion that "*metanoia*" and "*metanoeo*" means, "*repent - from your sins.*" This errant addition to these words reduce this great call of God - to a solitary focus on one's personal misdeeds ... **looking inward.** "*Metanoia*" / "*metanoeo*" become yet another self-centered exercise. We are naturally so self-centered, this type of teaching/peaching is quite natural. It is still "*all about me.*" As is so often the case, one error invariably causes other errors - in this instance, bigger errors. Biblical repentance is most often a great challenge from God **to look outside oneself** at the great issues He has forwarded.

**Investigate** the declarations about Jesus Christ - and change your mind about Him. **Examine** God's assertions about man's nature and condition - including yours - and change your mind. **Scrutinize** His accounts about the origin of death, the origin of this creation, and its destiny - and change your mind. **Study** His message about His provision for securing a right relationship with Him ... and change your mind (if you are of another mind). God's call of "*metanoia*" is a call to aggressively interact with Him on **spectacular, eternal, spiritual matters** - not just a call ... to look at one's belly button.

Those caught in this question, "*Does repentance come before believing?*" are asking, "*Do you turn from your sins - first - and then believe the gospel ... or do you believe first? Which is the right order?*" Overlooking the blunder of the meaning of "*metanoia*," let me submit this thought. No one will change his/her mind about anything until he/she becomes convinced - believes - initial determinations have been wrong. Belief always comes first.

### **Conclusion**

God Himself orchestrates the necessary changes of mind for each individual - culminating in this ultimate change of mind. "*From infancy you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation which is through faith in Christ Jesus*" (2Tim 3:15). Depending on an individual's starting point, and depending on his/her particular problems, there will be a series of changes in mind - that finally leads one to this ultimate change of mind - resulting in a person uttering his/her first received prayer.

I would love to change your mind about God and His claims and positions. But, I know I cannot. Even the disciples, who had witnessed Him perform more miracles than they could

record (Jn 21:25), when marveling at the risen Christ before them - still needed Him to “*open their minds to understand the Scriptures*” (Lk 24:36-45). I guess that is why God instructs Christians not to be “*quarrelsome, but kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps **God may grant them a change of mind leading to the knowledge of the truth ...***” These mind changes are gifts from God. The verse continues, “*and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him ...*” (2Tim 2:24-26). Of course, none of Satan’s captives ... believe they are. That is the whole point.

So, what changes in your thinking need to occur? Are you clinging to some old dead bone ... afraid to let go? Paul, after listing his pedigree and impressive accomplishments, said, “*I count them but rubbish - **dung** - in order that I may gain Christ*” ... and “*the surpassing value of knowing*” Him (Phil 3:8). Every person who abandons some contrary-to-God position for His way, always looks back and says the same thing Paul did. In fact, the further one moves from one’s dung, the greater the embarrassment of having valued it so. God is in the business of changing minds.

You may have noticed that I have not written some “*sinner’s prayer*” for you to repeat after me ... so that you will have then uttered the most powerful prayer you will ever utter - your first received prayer of “*metanoia*” / “*metanoeo*.” The publican said, “*God, have mercy on me, the sinner!*” (Lk 18:13). But, ... you are not the publican. The thief said, “*Jesus, remember me when You come in Your Kingdom*” (Lk 23:42). But, ... you aren’t a thief on the cross. I said, “*Lord, I do believe You were laying there stone cold dead, and God raised You from the dead. This is impossible for man, but I do believe God did this with You and these accounts about it were written by men who truthfully wrote what happened. And for You to have been framed and murdered - when You did nothing wrong - and then be on the other side of death’s door as the Judge of all men ... that makes sense to me. You earned that place. Lord, I need You in every way there is. Please come in and take over ....*” But, ... you are not me. You see, it’s not required that you be that long-winded. **You** utter what **you** need to utter as a result of **your** changed mind. Those words will be the product of what is now ... a changed heart. The Explosion in the corridors of eternity - before the angels of God ... will then occur.

Maybe right now would be a good time to say something to Him. What else are you doing ... that is more important? Maybe your mind is a bit different than it was a few moments ago. Maybe it’s time to utter your first received prayer - the prayer of “*a changed mind - a changed perception*.” What else could you do right now ... that would accomplish more?

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