

The Renewing of Your Mind

By Paris Reidhead*

Tonight I feel rather like that preacher of whom I heard some years ago, when he was asked his procedure. Well, he said, first I tells them what I am going to tell them, and then I tells them what I told them.

And that is about what I am prepared to do tonight. I would like to tell you what I told you, so that you understand it and you see it. Now we have been speaking from the Old Testament. Tonight I would like to ask you to turn to Romans, Chapter 12, and verse 2. I would like to give you the definition of what we have been defining. How will that be? The definition of our definitions. And so in Romans, Chapter 12, and verse 2, you will find that we have the New Testament summary of what we have been saying from Genesis, right now in the book of Numbers.

I am going to read the first two verses in order that there might be continuity:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

We have been speaking of repentance. We began back in Genesis 6, on Wednesday night a month ago, when we presented to you this truth, that it repented God that He had made man. We defined repentance as a change of mind, a change of will, a change of intention, and a change of purpose, resulting in a change of action.

Since that time we have been seeking to enforce this truth, in one aspect or another, in the various parts of the Word of God. The question would first be asked is this, To whom would such truth apply? And the answer has to be, To everyone. For the Lord Jesus Christ said, “Except you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luk. 13:3). Repentance, therefore, is universal in its application. There is none from whom it can be excluded. All are included. When He said, “Except you repent,” He established, fixed, once and forever, an unalterable requirement to escape from perishing, absolute necessity of a total, complete and unreserved change of direction, will, action, and purpose. It was necessary for Him to say it, that we might have that truth which has been as eternal as He is brought again to focus here in the New Testament. So we find our Lord Jesus said it, and we find Paul is saying it. He is saying it throughout His ministry. On Mars Hill, “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Act. 17:30). When he takes leave of the Ephesian elders, “I was with you night and day, from house to house, teaching repentance toward God” (Act. 20:20-21). And at his defense before Agrippa, “I was not disobedient to the Heavenly vision, delivered to them of Damascus, Jerusalem, Jews, and Gentiles, how that they must repent” (Act. 26:19-20). It was the ministry of Paul, and it was the ministry to the unsaved, ministry to all sinners everywhere, universal in its application, inescapable requirement that sinners discover that sin is a crime to which they have consented and in which they have willfully engaged, that there is no possibility of pardon until they recognize that this crime is refusing to let God be God, refusing to allow Him to rule, refusing to allow Him to have His place, the place for which man was intended, the place that He demands; namely, that of sovereign on the throne of the heart. Sin: turning to our own way, willing our own will, choosing our own thoughts. Repentance, turning back to God’s way, willing God’s will, choosing God’s course. This you must understand. And it has to precede forgiveness. This we must see. We must understand that there can be no pardon until there has been a change of intention about the pursuit of sin. Now we might as well face it. “Except you repent, you will perish.” Put repentance in front of escaping from perishing.

But not, having said that, is this all that can be said? Is repentance simply something that one does at a point of his approach to God, and having done it he can happily say, This is finished. No. A change of mind to be genuine and real has to be continued, and the evidence of the genuineness of one’s repentance is the fact that he does not change his mind back again.

Now, back here at the threshold of pardon, the sinner said, Thy will be done, as a matter of principle. Thy will be done, as a matter of government. Thy will be done, as a matter of recognition of the Person of Jesus Christ as the rightful sovereign. But obviously he could not have fulfilled that will at that place. Could he? He could not have done all of God’s will at that point

where he said, "Thy will be done" (Mat. 6:10). All it could be would be a change of direction, not a pursuit of the course. He has changed, he has been headed north; now he is headed south. But he has not gone south yet. But until God sees that he has reversed his direction, there is no pardon. But at the moment of his reversal of direction, he prepared for pardon, but he has not pursued this direction.

And so we find that repentance, to be real, must be continued, must be permanent. I used an illustration some weeks ago that I want to use again tonight, because I think it is appropriate. The other day, I had the privilege of speaking to a group of people in Pennsylvania. I finished the ministry and started home. It was not hard to do. I left with the intention of getting back as quickly as I could to a night's rest. But you know, there were a great many decisions that had to be made after I had made that original decision. There had to be an implementation of that decision. I was some time getting onto the turnpike, had to go through several small Pennsylvania towns. There was a lot of traffic. And so there was stopping at red lights, and stopping at the through stop streets; there was avoiding ruts, holes in the road, meeting traffic, passing slow cars, or stopped cars. There were innumerable decisions that had to be made after I made that original decision to go back home. But every decision that I made after I made that original decision was in keeping with it. And if you had seen me, turning right out in the Pennsylvania Dutch country, you would have said, Where is he going? You might not have known unless you had been behind the wheel. Then you would have known that I was going back home as fast as I legally could. And so there was not any question about it in my mind. To you, as an observer in the field, or out on the front porch, seeing the car go by, say, Where is he going? I knew where I was going, because I had made a decision to go home, and every subsequent decision was but an extension of it.

Now this is what we understand repentance to be. A decision that you make at the very threshold of the Christian life. Jesus Christ is going to rule my life. No longer am I going to usurp a throne that was intended for the Son of God. I have recognized that this is a crime, a crime of treason, for which I justly deserve capital punishment. I have renounced the crime, no longer intend to pursue it, and I have now turned the vehicle of my life in the direction of the will of God. And this means that every subsequent decision must be made in the light of that change of direction.

Now I have been speaking to people that are for the most part Christians, that have repented. And what am I saying to them when I say, Deal with all known sin? I am saying this. If you have genuinely repented in the past, when you have been brought into a dead-end street or to a detour, you are going to give evidence of the genuineness of your purpose to please God by backing out of that dead-end street, and turning around in that detour, and getting back on the main road. And so when we have been saying at the invitation to people, Are you prepared to deal with sin? Are you prepared to confess all known sin? Are you prepared to forsake all known sin? What we are essentially saying is, Did you really mean it when you told Jesus Christ that you repented of your sin. Did you really intend to do it? If so, then evidence it by dealing with that which He shows you now to be contrary to His will. Get back on the main road. You have been in the ditch; back out of it. You have been shunted off into the side; back out of it. You have been in a dead end street; you have been on a detour; back out of it. Turn around. Get back on the road of obedience. Fine to get back on the road. But now when you are back on the road, when you have broken before the Lord, met Him on His terms, all past sin is forgiven, and what do you do? You reaffirm that which was the intention that you made way back there at the threshold of your forgiveness, when you said, I am going to please God, and I am going to do what He wants me to do. And you reaffirm it by dealing with that which happens. And on the day after, if you have been in the ditch, the day after you are out of the ditch, then when you come to a chuckhole in the road called temptation, or to a detour called sin, or to, low side, soft side, slothfulness, you are going to avoid it. Every decision you make is going to be in the light of this main decision to please God, just as when you are driving you set your mind to go home, and there is a bad place, they have dug a trench to put in a gas main, and if you are foolish you will hit that trench even at the speed they allow. It will hurt your car; it will never be the same. You had better slow down. And so they see you slowing down. Are you going to stop? Is this what you are doing? Stopping before you get home? No. Not stopping. I am trying to protect the vehicle for the trip. There is a red light. Someone sees you stop the car dead still. Has he quit? No. Every decision that he makes, he makes in the light of his purpose. And there are innumerable corrections, and innumerable decisions that you have to make after you have made this main decision to please God. And this is the extension of repentance.

Now I said I wanted you to see it from Romans 12:2. Notice here he has said, "I beseech you that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice." This is very interesting. It is the present tense. Present now. I beseech you now, rather, that you present now

your bodies a living sacrifice... And you have a combination here of the present and the eras tense which literally make it, “I beseech you *that at this very moment, once and for all, never needing to do it again*, you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” And having done this, this is the deeper aspect of repentance, you see. Back there you said, Lord, You are going to rule in my life, and so you quit sin, quit lying, you quit stealing, you quit drunkenness, you just quit all that was contrary to God’s will and plan and purpose. This was the top level of repentance. Then the second level of repentance was that you saw at the Cross, that Jesus Christ not only died for you, but He died as you. It was not only what you had done, but it was what you were, so you changed your mind about your ability to live the Christian life. Now you have come to this other aspect where He says, “Present your body a living sacrifice.” You cannot live it, but He can through you.

Then notice what it says. Even after you have presented your body a living sacrifice, even, after you have known the fullness of the Holy Spirit, how are you transformed? How are you changed? “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Now what is this? It means bringing your mind, your attitude, always to conform to the attitude and mind of Jesus Christ. This is simply what it means. How are you transformed? Well look what has happened. Back here at the threshold of the Christian life, you said, From now on Jesus Christ is going to be the God of my life, the King, the Ruler, Sovereign of my life. Good. Along the way you said, Well I see that it is not enough for me to purpose to do the will of God. I discover that in me there is another law, the law of my own nature and traits fights against the law of God, and I see that I was so bad that Christ not only died for me, but He died as me. I cannot live the Christian life. Here is another change of mind. You see, when you began, you said, If God will just forgive me, I’ll obey Him. You met it and so did I. But you know what happened? We did not, because there was another law in our members, a law called the law of sin, of habit, of trait, of disposition. So here, with our minds, with our whole beings in a sense, we have committed ourselves to please God, but now we discover that there is this frustration and this conflict.

So, in Romans 6 we discover that we cannot live the Christian life, and that God’s intention was that Jesus Christ live it through us. But before He can live it through us, we have got to present our bodies to Him. And this brings us right up to the place of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. So what I want you to see is, that even after you are filled with the Spirit, repentance is still the rule. That is the point that.. of what I am saying tonight. Even after you have known identification with Christ, even after you have known the fullness of the Spirit, you are still transformed by the renewing of your mind. When you discover that your mind, your thought, your will, your plan, is not in accord with His mind, His thought, His will, His plan, you change your mind, your will, your thought, your plan to coincide with His. Do you see? And because of this you change, you are transformed. Do you follow? It is a continuous process. This is the process aspect of our transformation.

So, what you heard me say, some of you at least, that the germ, the seed of all holiness, all righteousness, is in repentance. For, what is it? Out here, still under a mountain of guilt, you said, From now on Jesus Christ is going to be the ruler of my life as well as the Savior of my soul. That is the principle. That is the heart of it. That is the seed of it. So right there in that change, you changed and said, I’m going to go home. I’m going to go to Heaven. Well, that is one way of putting it. I am going to please Jesus Christ. I am going to obey Him. That is another way, a better way of putting it. And so, as you came, what was the first thing that He asked you to do when you decided to please Him, to realize that He died for you and receive Him as Lord and Savior. So, if you truly repented, instead of rejecting Christ, saying we won’t have this Man rule over us, you received Him as the One who died for you, that was your first step. Were you through then? because you were pardoned? No. The next step was, you couldn’t live the Christian life -- perhaps you failed. Let’s put it that way - the next step in, you failed the Lord. You told Him you were going to obey Him, and you failed, and so your heart was plunged into grief because you sinned, even after you had been forgiven.

So, what did He prescribe? You said, I am going to obey Him, back here, and so you have sinned. Now what are you going to do? Well you are going to have to break. You are going to have to bend. You are going to have to bow, because that is what He said. The broken and contrite spirit He will not despise. Confess your sins, and He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. So after you have received Him as Lord and Savior, and then you failed Him, well what does He prescribe? Brokenness, confession, cleansing, and restoration. But is this to be the pattern? just to break? bend, bow in grief because you have sinned? to go back after being forgiven to go through the same process again? Is there

something more? As you come on you say, Yes, He died for me, but He also died as me, and now I have got to change my mind. I cannot live this life in my own energy. Jesus Christ wants to live His life through me by His Holy Spirit. So you are transformed by the renewing of your mind, from what you thought when you were forgiven, I am going to live for You, Lord, and you meant it, till you discover that you just do not have what it takes. Do you see? So now that you have discovered that you do not have what it takes, you do not sit down and say, Well I cannot live the Christian life. It is useless to try. And nobody is perfect. And so then you go on and settle in sin. No, this is not what you do. This is what hypocrites do, counterfeit believers do, but Christians do not, those that are truly repented, because even though they find this road is blocked they have got to go through and find a road that is not, because they have committed themselves to go home. That is where they are going. They have made up their mind. So this may be. They cannot get through on this road, of doing it in their own strength; but they say, Lord, do you have a road? Then they look at a map, and He says, Yes, turn right at the Cross. And as you come to the Cross, you see that not only He died for you, but you were there. So now you have been transformed by the renewing of your mind, bringing your mind in accord with His mind, to release you from the tyranny of your nature, and disposition, and your traits.

So, every step of the way you are transformed by the bringing of your mind in accordance with His, your idea in accord with His, your understanding in accord with His.

Then you come to the place where, Well, Lord, I am crucified with you, and I do not have to do these things that once seemed so compulsive. Thank you for victory, but isn't there something more? Oh yes, "present your body a living sacrifice." I am asking you to give Me your brain, your eyes and ears, hands, heart, lips. I want, you see, to have your body given to Me the same way that Mary gave Me a body so that I could walk. I want you to give me your body, so that I can fill you, and walk in you, and walk through you.

Oh, now you are transformed by the bringing of your mind in accord with His mind, that His mind was not for you to pull yourselves up by the bootstraps of your determination, and say, I am going to... No, you couldn't. His mind was for you to realize that He didn't expect... He knew you wouldn't, and couldn't. But He knew that He could, and would. And the only thing that would stand in the way of your obeying Him was the fact that you would not bring your mind in accord with His mind, your idea in accord with His idea. But now, if you will just change your mind about this so that it agrees with His mind, then you release Him to transform your life, you release Him you see to transform your life. But you are transformed by the renewing of your mind, by bringing your idea into accord with His idea.

Now what is the preacher's task in all preaching? The whole of preaching is to find out what the mind of God is from His Word, and to communicate that to the people. To do it and then to communicate it. But what is your task. When you have found out the mind of God, the will of God, to walk in it, because you can know it, but if you do not walk in it you won't be transformed. You will be the same old you, but you know you'll even be worse than that, because the light you had will become darkness, and you will be worse off than you were. It is like being on the road with no headlights, and you are in the ditch.

I was driving through the country one night, and I slid up in the seat to reach something, and my knee bumped the button, the little plug that pulled on the lights in that car. And I wasn't going fast, only what the law allowed, about 35 I suppose, maybe a little - between 35 and 40. But when you are on a country road, on a dark night, going 35 miles an hour, and the lights go out, I have news for you. You feel that you have just taken off from a launching pad and you are on your way into outer space. It seems awfully fast, because you just lose all orientation in the sudden darkness.

Friend, when we have the mind of God, and the will of God, and the truth of God, and we do not walk in it, it is just like putting the lights out. We are wandering. Now if we had walked in the light, we would have been transformed, there would have been change. But we did not. So all of a sudden, it is muddy, there is confusion. We have given place to the enemy, and instead of being transformed by the renewing of our minds we have been confused by the unwillingness to bring our minds into accord with His. What I am therefore trying to show you, through the Word of God is this, that there is an eternal principle that God has introduced into His dealings with men which requires us to begin at a point where we say, Thy will be done; and live the rest of our life in the outworking of that principle of obedience to the will of God, that every step, every issue, every crisis, that we can continue in this attitude of submission to the will of God, that the moment that we know the mind of God we are

already committed to it. No battles need to be fought any longer. There ought to come a time when some battles are over. There ought to come a time when we have finished fighting with God. There ought to come a time when we simply come to the place where when we said, Thy will be done, we meant it.

Now when we find out the will of God, we walk in it. When we find out what God desires, we do it. Our only concern is, What is Thy will. Not, O Lord, be patient with me while I find out whether I want to do Your will. This is too costly. What I am seeking therefore to do, by all of this emphasis, is to teach you that the principle is one of constant reference to the will of God, as that will is unfolded to you.

Now if any of you are expecting to have God unfold His will to you in the same way that the Triple A, I have not been a member for many years, but when I travelled a great deal by car, I was. And I would go in at Chattanooga, Tennessee, and I would tell what my itinerary was, and they had the last word on road repairs, and washed-out bridges, and so on. And I would call up and give the girl at the desk my itinerary, and tell her where I wanted to go. Then I would come in and pick it up. She would smile and put it on the counter and say, Here's your trip. Well, I suppose it was. They were stripped maps she used, and she had a felt pen with translucent ink, and she would draw over it, quite easy to follow, safe from mistakes. You would unfold this, and there would be the southeaster map of the United States, and this yellow line all away around, starting there and coming back.

Now, if you think God is going to give you that kind of an unveiling of His will to your life, you are mistaken. No. No. No. That is not what He is going to do. But He does not need to. Are you convinced that God is who He says He is, that He has all wisdom, that He has all love, that He has all power. Well then, if that is the case, you know three things about His will. It is good, and it is acceptable, and perfect. Good, because God is good. Acceptable, because you could not do better if you did it. My friend, you could not make a more loving plan for your life than God already has, because He put all of His love into it. You could not make a wiser plan for your life than God already has, because He put all His wisdom into it. And you could not make a more fulfilled, acceptable plan than God has made, because He put all of His power into it. So all of God's wisdom, His love, and His power, have gone into His will for your life. He does not need to confer with you. You do not need to have a conference with God, and say, Now Lord, I think you made the wrong corner there. You know really, I think in the light of my more mature experience, Lord, I wouldn't have sent me to that school, I wouldn't have had me do this. Such insolence, such irreverence. You do not need to know God's plan. All you need to know is God. If you know Him, you are content to take His plan, whatever it is. You see, you do not need to know where He is sending you. You just know Him. Do you understand this? It is good, and acceptable, and perfect.

When God says to you, no, you cannot have this relationship any longer. O Lord! And we fight. It is a corner. But do you remember what you said back there at the threshold? Thy will be done. Now God says, Turn right. Yes Lord. You see if you do not turn right, the whole plan is off. You are wandering around in failure. The whole thing is off. You have got to follow the plan. And so God's plan is to make you like Jesus Christ, make you like His Son, and that means that you are going to be transformed by the renewing of your mind at every corner, and every turn; and if you do not turn when God says, Turn, you are on your own. It is like a railroad, you know, that gets off the track. It can spin its wheels, but it won't get very far. My dear Christian friends, some of us know what it is to spin our wheels. We sit there with the piston rods going, the wheels going, and the smoke pouring out of the stack, whistle blowing; come back four years, wheels just spinning in the mud. We have never even realized we are off the track. We have not moved.

If you want to move on into the wheel of God, you have got to be willing to be transformed by the renewing, making new your mind. Now this is what I am talking about, a principle that begins at the threshold and continues through every step of the way, a principle that at the very heart says, I will do the will of God, as the main course. And at each step of the way when there is an issue, makes a decision in the light of the will of God.

Coming back Labor Day weekend, and getting onto the Turnpike, on Labor Day evening (Excuse me) the radio saying, Four hundred and thirty, 440, 450 deaths. I want you to know I was driving as though I was walking on a basket of eggs. I was not like the man who was out some place on Memorial Day, and it got later and later and later, and someone asked, Why? Well, he

said, I heard there were going to be 500 deaths today, and I'm not going to start home till the quota is full. Well I just did not have that attitude at all. I felt that at every turn there was danger, there was difficulty. And every turn I made, I made, realizing that that man coming up behind me and those people in front of me, may be too tired or sleepy, or have imbibed too freely of intoxicating beverage, or be talking, or be doing something, spanking the children. You do not know what is going on in the other car. You have to drive for everybody.

And, dear friend, if you understand that you have enemies on every hand, your own nature within, people without, Satan below, you have to drive for everyone. And when the Word of God is unveiled, you have got to move into it, because you are going to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Listen, you have walked with the Lord thirty years, have you? Good. Let me tell you something. It is just as important to mind God tonight as it was 30 years ago. This is what we mean by the perseverance of the saints, that they persevere in the will of God. It means a continuous repentance that whenever my attitude, my mind, my disposition, my interests, conflict with God's, God has won. And I do not have to argue with Him anymore. He won. He won back there when I said, Thy will be done. Jesus, you are Lord. Now, 30 years later, He says, This is not right. Thank you, Lord. We won't have that any more. And it is just as important 30 years after you were converted to bend to the will of God as it was the day you began. If you are to keep out of the ditch, and out of grief, and out of discipline, and out of failure, and out of heartache. What I am trying to get you to see is that it is a principle to which you commit yourself, and that principle is obedience to the will of God, and at any point that your attitude, or plan, or purpose, or interest conflicts with His, the issue is already settled.

Now is that your attitude? This is what I am trying to convey. This is what I want you to see, to embrace, to become an operating principle, every day, every twist, every turn of the way. And it will see you safely into the arms of the Lord Jesus where there will be a crown of rejoicing. Something you can lay at His feet, because you fought a good fight, you have kept the faith, and (here it is) you have finished the course. You made every turn in accord with your decision to please God.

Let us pray.

Let us go to prayer and just ask the Lord to give us hearts like this, will like this, minds like this. Let us just ask God to give us a church, a people, whose one desire is to please God, that are committed to Him today in their recreation, in their business, in their families, in their romance, in their career, in every part of their life there is just a sweet, simple, governing principle, Thy will be done. "I delight to do Thy will, O God" (Psa. 40:8). This is the hymn of the repentant heart. Let us ask God to give us that kind of heart, and people with that kind of heart, and joy, great joy as a church in doing the will of God.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Wednesday Evening, September 5, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

©PRBTMI 1962