



Mind Matters: #1, Losing Our Minds
Romans 1:18-32; 8:5-8
September 15, 2019

The mind has a vital role in Christian life. For several reasons, it is imperative that we develop spiritually healthy thinking: 1) Our minds themselves either please God or displease him; 2) Jesus knows what is in our minds (Matthew 9:4; Luke 5:22; 6:8; 11:17; 1 Corinthians 3:20); and 3) Our minds determine our behavior (Romans 8:7-8). The mind matters. So today we begin a series of messages on it, beginning with what it is and how it goes astray.

The Bible does not make precise distinctions between various parts of our spiritual “anatomy.” Searching for uniform and fixed terminology about this will only frustrate and confuse us. Essentially, the Hebrews viewed thinking, emotions, and volition (will) as all taking place in the inner person and usually called this the heart. (Notice that *thinking* occurs in the *heart* in Matthew 15:19; Luke 1:51; and John 12:40.) Greek and English Bible versions often use various forms of the word “mind” to describe those things that take place in the heart that are related to thinking. The thinking (mind) aspect of our inner person is the focus of this series of messages.

The mind is not necessarily good nor bad spiritually, but it is able to become either. Romans 1 describes how minds go astray, something that has occurred countless times across the years. First, God has revealed himself through what he created (vv. 19-20; cf. Psalm 19:1-6), and the mind is able to perceive this (v. 20). It is not a complete revelation, but it is enough that people can see that there

is an eternal, powerful God and to nullify all excuses for ignoring him (v. 20).

Inevitably, however, people do just that. Even though they know there is a powerful God, they do not glorify him as God or give thanks to him (v. 21). That choice is fatal. Dreadful consequences ensue: Their thinking becomes futile or perverted and their hearts (inner person) become foolish and darkened. They start thinking they are wise when actually they are fools, and they choose to worship images of people and animals instead of God (vv. 22-23).

Based on people’s choice to ignore God, which incurs these initial adverse effects, God then also “gave them over” to various other consequences which deteriorate the human condition even more. God releases people to their sinful *desires*, leading to sexual impurity, the degrading of their bodies and idolatry (vv. 24-25). God releases them to shameful *passions*, leading to additional sexual sins (vv. 26-27). And He releases them to a depraved mind, which triggers a wide-ranging catalogue of sin (vv. 28-31). All these adverse effects are an expression of God’s wrath toward sin in the present (v. 18), intended to turn people back to him (Psalm 119:71; 1 Corinthians 11:32). Those who don’t turn back will answer to God’s final, righteous decree that those who live this way deserve death (Romans 1:32).

So, the decision not to glorify God as God or give thanks to him takes a terrible toll on us, including on our minds. Our minds become futile and dark (v. 21), develop a pretense of wisdom (v. 22), and ultimately become depraved (v. 28). Such minds are displeasing to God in themselves (Romans 8:5-8) and also lead to much more sin in our behaviors (Romans 1:28-32). Thankfully, God has provided a way for our minds to be renewed! But we won’t seriously pursue renewal until we first humbly face the fact that our minds are lost and debilitated.

