



Mind Matters: #3, The Beginning of the Renewal of Our Minds
Mark 1:14-15 and Others
September 29, 2019

Scripture teaches that we are adversely affected when we turn our backs on God. One far-reaching consequence is that our minds don't function well spiritually (Romans 1:18-32). Hopefully we are aware of this and feel the need to have our minds renewed by God. How can this happen?

The starting place is repentance. This word is often misused and misunderstood, but its basic meaning is "to change the mind." Though it may sound abrasive to our postmodern ears, Scripture unequivocally "commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a foundational teaching in Christianity (Hebrews 6:1).

Jesus called people to repent more than anyone else in Scripture. Repentance is an essential part of his message and necessary for entering the kingdom (Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 4:17). Those who do not do so will perish (Luke 13:1-8; see also Matthew 11:20-21; 12:41; Luke 10:13; 11:32). In contrast, when someone does repent, there is great joy in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10).

Jesus also commissioned his disciples to call others to repent (Mark 6:12; Luke 24:47). This they did repeatedly (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 20:21; 26:20). Like their Lord before them, they taught that repentance is prerequisite for forgiveness and salvation (Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; 11:18; 2 Corinthians 7:10).

Most of the Scriptures mentioned so far seem to address to people who have not yet turned to God (Luke 5:32), but Jesus also taught that his own followers would need to repent (Luke 17:3). The church followed Jesus' lead on this (2 Corinthians 7:8-12; 12:21; Revelation 2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19).

We may better understand the strong emphasis on repentance when we realize it is not merely trying to do better but rather a comprehensive change of the entire person, from the inside out. To change the mind, in Hebrew thought, entails a change of one's purpose, disposition, intention, will, and moral attitude. When we repent, our entire being turns away from sin (Acts 3:19; 8:22) and self-reliance (cf. Hebrews 6:1) and toward God (Acts 20:21; 26:20). Because this inward change is so far-reaching, genuine repentance always leads to a change of actions as well (Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11). The latter passage reminds us that godly sorrow for one's sin may also be present. In view of the strong emphasis on repentance in Scripture, we must not water down its meaning.

The repeated calls for us to repent show that we can in fact choose to do so. Even so, God is involved in our repenting. The proclamation of the kingdom was the basis for repentance in Jesus' teaching (Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 4:17). Later we read that the Lord gives or grants repentance (Acts 5:31; 11:18), and his kindness leads us toward it (Romans 2:4). We are to correct opponents of the faith gently in hopes that God will grant them repentance leading to life (2 Timothy 2:25). Repentance leads to faith (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21) and taking on the lowly status of a child (Matthew 18:1-3), which accords better with God working on us, than us accomplishing something on our own. God is indeed helps us repent. We also should note that the opportunity to repent is limited (Hebrews 3:7-8; 6:6; 12:17; cf. Psalm 32:6). Our hearts cannot endure constant hardening.

Authentic, thoroughgoing repentance is the beginning point for renewing our minds and indeed for all of Christian

