



Daily Verse and Comment

Mark 1:15

(15) "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

New International Version

Not only does Christ come to announce the soon-coming [Kingdom of God](#), in particular to those whom [God](#) calls, but also to prepare the elect for their spiritual responsibilities now and in the Kingdom.

[Repentance](#) is a prerequisite for belief. What is repentance? Its basic meaning is to change the mind. Once a person hears [the gospel](#) and is convicted that his way of life is wrong, he must alter his present behavior and "bear fruits worthy of repentance" ([Matthew 3:8](#)).

The fruits of repentance are visible actions—often called "works"—that show that a person has indeed changed. When John the Baptist preached repentance to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry, his audience asked him what they should do to repent. He answered: Clothe the naked, feed the hungry, do not steal, do not use one's authority to oppress, do not lie or accuse falsely, and be content with one's wages ([Luke 3:10-14](#)). In general, these actions are either showing [love](#) for one's neighbor or obeying God's laws.

[Jesus](#) says, "If you want to enter into [eternal] life, keep the commandments" ([Matthew 19:17](#)). Later, when asked what are the greatest commandments, Jesus answered, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart. . . .' And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" ([Matthew 22:36-40](#)). When we put all these things together, bearing fruits worthy of repentance is simply living as God does!

Believing the gospel is closely related to having [faith](#). When one believes something, he has faith, trust, confidence, that it is true. This confidence leads him to begin to act in accordance with what he believes, and the result is obedience to it or following it. Notice how the apostle Paul shows this in [Romans 10:8-10](#):

But what does [Scripture] say? "The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.

Verse 10 provides the balance to verse 9. It is not enough just to confess Jesus verbally and believe in the resurrection as an intellectual exercise. Paul explains that heartfelt belief leads to righteousness, which is simply right doing or godly behavior. Faith, then—living faith ([II Corinthians 5:7](#))—is trusting God's Word and doing it, even in the face of hardship, sacrifice, the contrary opinions of friends and family, or even death. The author of Hebrews, likely Paul, commends the "Heroes of Faith" to us for just these reasons (Hebrews 11).

Thus, Jesus' urgent command for us to repent and believe the gospel provides us with the negative and positive sides of a single, godly action. He tells us to rid ourselves of the evil we have been doing ("repent") and to begin doing what God expects of those to whom He has revealed His way of life ("believe"). This will lead to righteousness and salvation and—God promises—entrance into His Kingdom ([II Peter 1:2-11](#))!

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[The True Gospel \(Part 5\)](#)

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