

FIRST PETER 1:13-16 "Fix Your Hope Completely On Christ."

1Pe 1:13 "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Therefore! As I've said before, whenever you see the word therefore in the text it should raise the question, what is the "therefore" there for?

It should cause you to consider what has preceded because it is about to draw some significant conclusions concerning what has just been said and will then tie together what will follow.

A quick recap will show us that what has come prior is Peter's argument that the reason we can be so hopeful in the midst of this world, which can be very hard at times, is that our Savior has purchased us with His blood and has in store for us a heavenly home to which we can look.

That's the future aspect of our salvation. But the present hope is also knowing that our Savior is with us today and protecting us and providing for us and directing us in the power of His Spirit whom He has given us.

Speaking of Jesus Christ being our High priest, the writer of Hebrews says in Heb 7:25 "Therefore he is able to save completely [Or forever] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." He intercedes for you and me today before the Father.

Our salvation was purchased once for all by the shed blood of Christ and His glorious resurrection, but it's not a one-time gesture which has hope only when we see Him face to face in the future.

In our present state in this world Jesus is still interceding on our behalf and is actively involved in our lives because He desires to take this salvation He's purchased for us and to show how He is able to make our lives, our new life in Him, shine in this world to His glory.

Paul talks of this intercession on our behalf in Rom 8:33-34 "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who

died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

The writer of Hebrews once more. Heb 9:24 "For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."

Jesus, my Lord and Savior is personally for me as I stand in Him. And if He is for me who can be against me?

Therefore, taking all of that into consideration, how should I respond? Glad you asked, because Peter has an answer given to him by the Spirit.

Verse 13.... "prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed."

There are a number of things we want to look at here. "Prepare your minds for action". This doesn't sound like the kind of relationship that sits on the sidelines as we cheer the team on. No, we're on the team and we've been hand-picked by God Himself, not because we deserved to be on the team, but because He chose to love us and bring us to Himself.

But, He brought us to Himself to serve Him and love Him. Action is the word Peter uses. "Prepare your minds for action". That's the gist of it. What the NIV has done here is to show us that an action is to take place, but in the original Greek it gives a word picture of the kind of action.

The original reads "gird up the loins of your minds for action". For Twentieth century Christians living in America girding up your loins doesn't mean much. But those living in Peter's time knew exactly what this imagery meant.

In those days the men would wear long tunics which is kind of like a robe. It kept them relatively clean from all of the dirt and dust they had to contend with. But if they had to do a job where the robe got in the way or slowed them down they would gird their tunics around their loins.

That just meant that they pulled up their robe and tied it around their waist. Now they're ready for action. Nothing can hinder them from moving freely and effectively for the task at hand.

Peter is saying that it's time to take your salvation and the task of serving Christ, and to free yourself up so you may go about without the hindrances of this world which affect us so much.

But it's a positive action. You have to gird your own loins. You have to take the steps necessary to get ready for action. Place yourself in the position of being used by God. And that comes about as we submit to His will.

And this is where Peter brings in what that will is and how it's relayed to us. What are we girding up according to our text? Our minds. The Greek word for mind doesn't speak of the grey matter between our ears. It's not necessarily referring to an organ in our skull.

The idea of mind carries with it our ability to think and what we think about. But it also includes our moral faculties which flow from how we think.

Christians need to be thinking people. But what we think about is very important. In fact, what we think about will determine how we will live for Christ.

If we're not taking every thought captive and considering how the things in this life affect us, then like that guy in the first century who wore those long robes, we'll be tripping over ourselves when it comes time to run for the Lord.

We need to be in a constant state of readiness as we gird the loins of our minds for action. And this gets to the heart of why we need to be engaging our minds when we come to God's word to get direction and guidance as we seek the Spirit to direct us into all truth.

This is what Paul meant when he spoke of the armor of God in Eph.6:14.... "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth." Unless we are girding our minds with God's truth our ability to stand firm is greatly hindered. And our ability to be ready for action is also hindered.

Unfortunately, in the world today, and particularly in the church today, there is a movement away from engaging our minds in God's objective truth and relying more on a contemplative or emergent worldview where we meditate, not on God's revealed truth, the bible, but in some emotional illusive meditative subjective process whereby we seek our inner man.

Once we turn our eyes inward we lose sight of what the truth is because the inner man invariably promotes what makes self happy instead of glorifying the God who delivered us from sinful self.

It's difficult to encourage someone from the truth of God's word if we don't spend the time learning from the Lord in His word. You see it's the word of God which builds us up and equips us for action. It is designed by God to affect every area of life so that we don't have to depend on the wisdom of men for answers.

That's why Paul wrote to Timothy in 2Ti 3:16-17 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

This is why Peter continues in verse 13, "be self-controlled". The literal translation is be sober. His thought here is not talking about alcoholic beverages. In fact it's assumed they're in their right minds.

But, to be able to correctly understand the hope we have in Christ, *(for a more in-depth look into this hope, please go back and read my two messages on 1 Peter 1:3-5, parts 1 and 2)*, and to be able to rejoice in that hope in the midst of trials, Peter says we must be able to be self-disciplined in the area of learning more of our God and then walking in that truth.

Dr. Heibert in his commentary on 1Peter says, {The idea of being sober}, "inculcates a calm, steady state of mind that evaluates things correctly, so that it is not thrown off balance by new and fascinating ideas."

In other words we need to be sober in our thoughts so that we are not tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine; this new experience, that new teaching. Lots of people are constantly running everywhere looking for some new thing to help them in their walk with Christ.

Seminars on how to better understand your man-hood or woman-hood. And new scientific revelations show how you can determine if you're using the left side of your brain or the right side when making decisions.

What about a new feeling? Are your present feelings growing dim? Do you seem less excited about your faith? Then come to Brother Bob's spiritual gymnastics seminar and he'll pump you up.

Action to a lot of people is getting in the car and driving to one more revival. May we ask the Spirit of God to do revival in us and revival in our communities to where some real action can take place, bringing people to Christ.

Many people spend more time running here and there and they're not being sober (self-controlled), when it comes to girding their minds for action and "fixing their hope completely on the grace to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

This is what Peter says at the end of verse 13... If your hope has been completely set on the grace of Christ to be revealed when He comes, what room is there for doubt?

If the grace of Christ, which of course includes every aspect of our salvation, both present and future, will be fully realized when Jesus comes back for us, and if that is where we are to be focusing, then how can we possibly get side-tracked with the temptations and trials of life?

You want an honest answer? Because this is not where our focus is every moment of our lives. Sometimes the temptations and trials are where we are focusing. It's not as though Peter is saying that unless you're always focusing on this grace you're a second rate Christian.

No, he recognizes how our focus gets sidetracked and he's simply encouraging us on how to get it back. And verse 13 is that process. Be in the word of God, the truth which is able to set us free in Christ, and be self-controlled as you ask the Spirit for His power. And as we come to Christ His grace will begin to shine and our focus will be back on Him.

This is the process Paul had to go through.

2Co 12:7-10 "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is

why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Paul's eyes were on the problem. This thorn in the flesh was something he didn't like and it took his focus away from what God was doing. In fact he went to the Lord on three separate occasions. He may not have been consumed with this situation, but he was concerned with it.

But where did he find his hope? In the grace of God which was promised to him which is found in Christ. When he realized that nothing in this life is greater than God's grace working in us, then his focus was right back on the God who gives grace.

It's a process we all go through. But God's grace is sufficient and our hope is based on the grace ready to be revealed fully when Jesus comes back. That's being eternally minded instead of temporal minded.

We will struggle with this in this life, but that's why it's so important to gird up the loins of our minds as we take God's truth to heart. He is a faithful God who loves us and will be there for us.

This is why we don't want to take our salvation for granted and think that it doesn't matter to God how we conduct ourselves in this life.

1Pe 1:14-16 "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." [Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7]

Obedience to our God is what our lives should characterize. In fact, once again, the original Greek makes this clear because the literal translation is not "As obedient children", but "As children of obedience."

The original language would support the idea that we should be obedient, but the thought includes the reason for our ability to be obedient; the reason is we are children of obedience.

Why? Because we are children of God, who has called us to Himself and has given us a new nature; a nature of obedience to the One who loved us and gave us a new birth to a living hope.

And so it's not as though Peter is just saying that you must be obedient, as much as he's saying, walk in the new nature God has already given you; a nature which not only wants to obey but has the power in the Spirit to obey.

What this does is take our obedience out of the realm of simply being performance based, which is nothing short of legalism, and places it back where it belongs, which is Spirit based as we walk in the Spirit.

And then he contrasts their former lives, which were devoid of the Spirit, with this new life in Christ. And he characterizes it by saying, "do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance."

The NAS puts it, "do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in ignorance."

The word conforming here carries with it the idea of patterning your life to the old ways of lusting after the things of this world, and as such, he infers that as being disobedience.

The contrast is made even clearer when Paul says in Eph.2:1-2.... "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."

We who are in Christ are called "children of obedience"; those outside of Christ, whose natures love only the world, are referred to as "sons of disobedience".

Both Paul and Peter say, 'that's what you used to be. Don't show forth the old life by elevating it above the new life Christ has given you.' That would be like being invited to a banquet and instead of honoring the host by eating of his feast, we bring the garbage found in the back of our houses and place it on the plate. We dishonor the One who invited us to partake of His bounty.

Christ has given us of His eternal bounty and desires that we honor Him by partaking of that and laying aside the garbage from which we've been delivered.

1Pe 1:14 "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance."

Being ignorant doesn't mean we don't have information about God. Lots of people have information about the One true God. Many of them have gained information from the Bible and have even tasted the goodness of God as they come into contact with Christians, or come into contact with the Body of Christ-at-large and enjoy the blessings extended to the Body.

But they may still be ignorant; ignorant in the sense that they don't know this God. They may know about Him, but they haven't come into a personal relationship with Him. That kind of relationship can only happen as we personally receive the gift of salvation extended to us in Christ, by faith.

And so Peter's point is that if you are not ignorant of God; if you personally know Him and love Him, as you love Christ, then you have no excuse for going back to the garbage heap.

In fact, if a person patterns his life after the old man, and whose desires do not desire after God at all, while claiming to be a new creature in Christ, then that person has deceived himself according to the word of God.

Peter talks of this in his second letter when he addresses false teachers who gave the impression that they personally knew God when in fact they only acknowledged the things of God to be true with their lips, not with their lives.

2Pe 2:21-22 "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them." 22 Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," [Prov. 26:11] and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

A dog that returns to its vomit is simply a graphic way of saying that they returned to what their true nature really is. If you fear that this could happen to you, then you have just demonstrated that you have a healthy fear of the God who loved you and called you to Himself.

And you have just demonstrated that your new nature in Christ is real and working in a way where you don't want to ever fall into such disobedience. It doesn't mean you won't disobey God. It simply means that if we are a child of obedience in Christ, then it hurts and causes godly sorrow, when you do disobey Him.

And then Peter gives us the reason we will strive to please our God.

1Pe 1:15-16 "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." [Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7]

We have been called to holiness. Now when people hear the word holy it's often construed to mean a variety of things it's not meant to mean. "Holier than thou", "Holy Roller" or even holy as one who has a permanent halo transfixed above their heads.

When the Bible talks of holy it has in mind something or someone set apart for a special Godly purpose. The Greek word is *hagios* and it can also mean sacred; blameless; consecrated.

God is blameless in all ways. He is perfect. He is the epitome of holiness because He is holiness. He has called us into a personal relationship with Himself. And this relationship is designed to reflect His character and life in us.

It's a similar picture we see in the phrase, "Like Father, like son." If we have been born again by the Spirit unto the Father through faith in Christ, then it stands to reason that this new life God has given us is meant to be a life that reflects the One who gave it.

It's not meant to be a burden God places on us to ruin all our fun. It's meant to be a new desire that could only be there if we've been given a new nature in Christ. And therefore it will happen that our lives will show forth holiness.

As certainly as God is holy we will demonstrate those desires He has given us. This is why Peter quotes from Lev 11:44 "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy."

"It is written", are the words Peter uses. God's word stands firm. And just as you can trust that you have a new life in Christ because of the living word made manifest in your lives, you can also be certain that God is working in and through you for His good pleasure.

And nothing pleases Him more than to see His children gladly wanting to obey Him and to be just like their Father who bore them and gave them life.

We will not reach perfect holiness until we're in His presence, but while on the earth, we have the greatest privilege to show this world we belong to the Creator who loved us enough to send His Son into the world to die for the penalty of our sins.

And He's the same God who want us to give this message to a dying world by what we say and by the way we live for Him. If you're not as far along as you'd like to be, when it comes to holiness, don't give up, because it's God who can give you the strength to be what He wants you to be.

But remember the process that God has put into place and what Peter has exhorted us to consider as we are conformed into the image of Christ.

"Gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Seek Him and He'll be there for you.