

Our Calling: Right Thinking and Right Living

1 Peter 1:13-16

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I remember some years ago someone saying something like this to me: "Pastor Steve, why do you spend so much time in your messages on the exposition and then do the application? Why not just skip to the application? That's what I like."

One answer is the same reason that a family that forgoes the meal and skips to the dessert won't be very healthy. The meat and veggies give the body vitality. Another reason is that Scripture doesn't do that. The New Testament letters start with doctrine and then do application. If our applications lack doctrinal grounding, they won't last long.

Peter would agree and has started 1 Peter with a clear and wonderful doctrinal explanation of the gospel. Verses 3-12 are a rich description of God's mercy, Jesus' saving work, and new life by faith in Jesus. Verse 13 begins with the word, *"Therefore."* That's biblical code meaning, *time for some application.* Let's talk about what this looks like on the street level of life.

"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:13-16)

There are two direct commands here. The two commands are *"set your hope fully on the grace to be revealed"* and *"be holy in all your conduct."* Hope fully and be holy. Before you think, *that doesn't sound practical enough,* there is more here than meets the eye. Notice that these verses are part of a larger section to follow that calls us to holiness of life. Why? God is holy, God is our judge, and we were redeemed from sin to a new way of life by the precious blood of Christ. We'll talk more about those in coming weeks. Today, let's see why hope and holiness in the ups and downs of life is where believing the gospel takes us.

Future Grace

"Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Verse 13)

Hope is by nature always oriented toward the future. We don't hope in what has already happened; we hope for things to come. Here Peter refers to a future grace that will come when Jesus is revealed. Jesus' future revelation or return is referred to in verse 5, verse 8, and here in verse 13. Does it surprise you that a letter about enduring suffering would point us toward our future?

So what grace to be revealed is he talking about? Isn't God's grace complete already? Aren't we saved already by grace?

"The grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ means the further store of undeserved blessings which God would will pour out on them when Christ returns." (Grudem) Grace is God's undeserved goodness and blessing to us. What he's done already

is amazing enough, isn't it? If what we have in Christ and salvation is all God gave us, we're still singing, *"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me."*

But here we see God's not done yet. There are even more undeserved blessings coming to us in the future. Future grace. A quick summary includes:

- Ongoing conscious life upon physical death
- Physical presence with God
- Resurrected, glorified body
- Seeing and worshiping Jesus
- Eternal rewards for service on earth
- Eternal life, enjoyment, and pleasure on the new earth
- Eternal fellowship with fellow Christians/loved ones
- Eternal status and relationship as children of God

Many other things will be coming to us beyond what we can imagine. We don't deserve any of them. All of them are God's grace to us. Peter tells us to put our hope fully on this future grace. The inverse is true. *Don't put your hope on anything less than this.* Scripture calls us to not put our hope in our riches, physical vitality, fellow man, personal achievements, or things in this world which are all passing away. Hope in God. Hope in his grace. Hope in what is yet to come.

That sounds wonderful but how do we do that? Peter includes two means by which we set our hope fully on future grace. *"Preparing your minds for action"* and *"being sober-minded."* Both of them have to do with the mind; our thinking.

Serious truth/biblical/gospel thinking

"Therefore, preparing your minds for action..." (Verse 13)

This is an intriguing illustration Peter uses. The KJV translates it *"gird up the loins of your mind."* That is technically what the text says. For us, a loin is something to put barbecue on. "Loins" in the first century referred generally to clothing. Men would wear long robes. Robes are loins. When it came time to work, play, or fight, men would need to get the robes out of the way. I happened upon an illustration of how they did it (see the top of the next page).

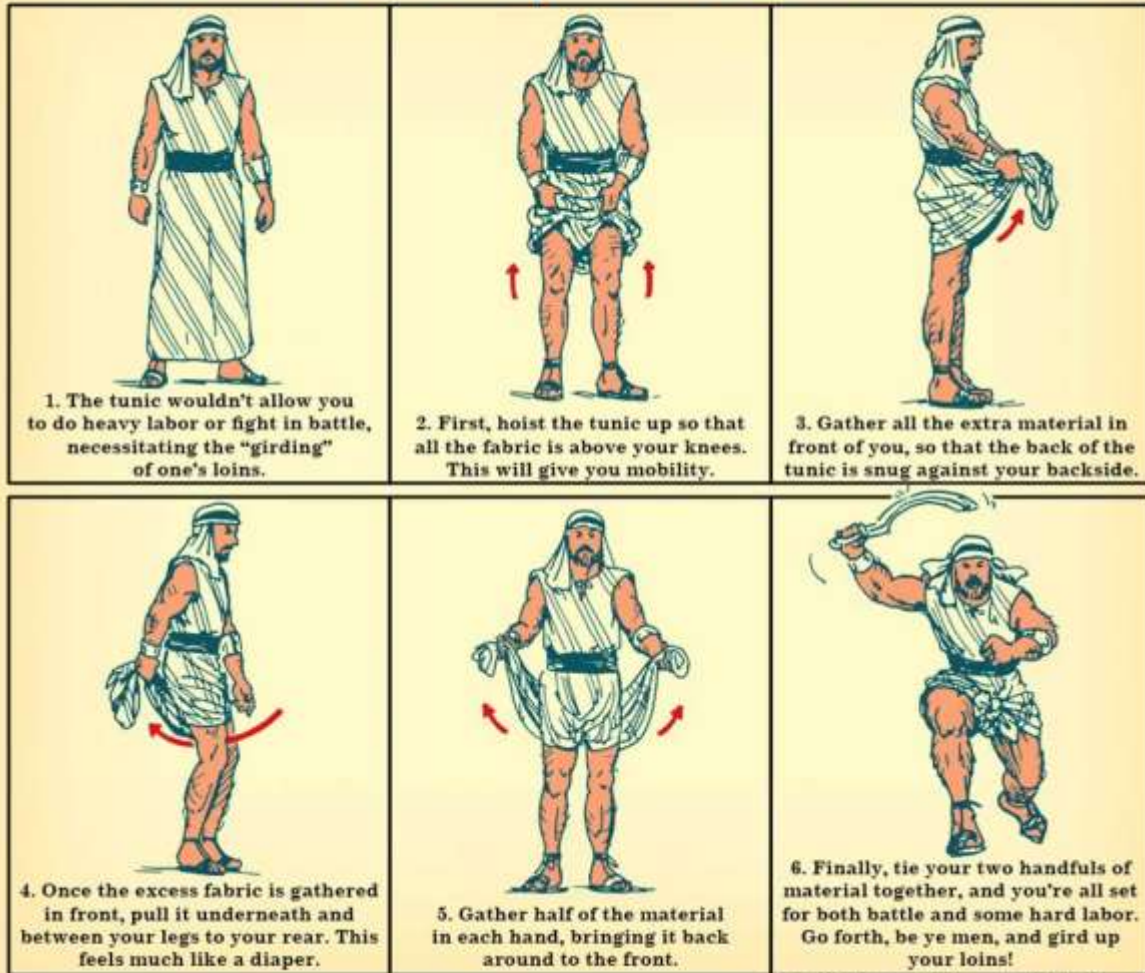
Do that with your mind. How? What does that mean?

Paul uses the same metaphor in Ephesians 6, *"Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth."* (Ephesians 6:14) Get the truth firmly fastened to your mind. Gird your mind. Gird on truth. Both show the critical importance of using our minds properly. How we think and what we think about. When a man girded his loins, he was about to get serious about something.

Why are our minds so important? Right thinking leads to right living. Proverbs says, *"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."* (Prov. 23:7 KJV). The mind is the battlefield. The enemy is anything that steals our confidence in God and hope for future grace.

How to Gird Up Your Loins

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Sober thinking

"Being sober-minded" (verse 13)

This word's most common use is regarding alcohol and intoxication. 1 Timothy 3 applies it to the qualification for an elder and it is also the mark of a spiritually mature woman. They don't use alcohol in any controlling way. However, most theologians interpret this more broadly as a whole approach to life.

"For Peter the cares of this life and the pressure of persecution can "intoxicate" the Christian and distract his or her focus just as easily as wine might... The need of the hour is clear judgment and a mind and will prepared to resist anything that would distract them from a hope set on Jesus' appearing." (Peter Davids, The First Epistle of Peter: NICNT, p. 67)

Sober thinking is thinking with clarity and focus; the refusal to allow anything to distract. This isn't sober in demeanor or personality. It is a focused mind that sees life through a grid

of gospel priority. It prioritizes God, the gospel, the church, the mission, and doing these things in light of eternity. Its highest and best thoughts are reserved for kingdom and spiritual matters.

Think about what you think about when you don't have to think about anything. How often do those thoughts turn toward spiritual realities? Do you think about God or ministry or Scripture or eternity? Do you intentionally direct your mind to think about what you want it to think about? You might say, *my mind has a mind of its own*. No it doesn't. We can direct our thoughts intentionally toward anything, but this takes discipline and habit.

I have been thinking about my mind some. It seems to me that I don't think as much as I used to. I find my mentally free moments increasingly filled by reading my email or social media or passively viewing things. Over time, this feels more and more normal. When it comes time to summon my brain to high and holy thinking, it struggles because it's too distracted. Distracted by what?

I want to spend a little time right here because I think this is such a problem these days. It's obviously a problem in the culture around us. It seems normal to see a family of five at the restaurant not talking to each other, not looking at each other, everyone engrossed in their smartphones. I remember coming up to greet a family before church and they all were focused on their phones—probably not reading the Westminster Catechism.

We are awash in trivial thinking about trivial things. Just look at what people post on Facebook as an indication of what they are thinking about. It's not always this way, but isn't there a lot of silly nonsense posted? If Facebook is an indication of where our minds are at, are we not a long way from Peter's admonition to think seriously and soberly about truth?

This is not a rant against media or movies or Twitter. I think Peter would have had a Twitter account. I just don't think he would tweet about dresses worn at the Grammys or Katy Perry's Super Bowl performance. In fact, what might Peter have shared? Don't we have it in front of us? What Peter writes about is what Peter was thinking about.

Think about your thinking. You can control your mind by what you put into your mind and what you allow yourself to think about. Satan doesn't need to convince you of some heresy if only he can distract you from the truth.

You may say, *why does this matter?* What's at stake here is hope. Hope in the midst of life. Hope in the midst of troubles and trials. Hope and faith that gets us through the ups and downs of life. Where does it come from? From clear and serious thinking about my life and my relationships and my trials and my everything through the grid of God's Word and gospel. The more habitually I meditate about these things, the more hope and endurance and joy and peace I will have in the trials of life.

How? What gender is our baby?

Get rid of distractions

Increase truth input – "Whatever things are pure, lovely, commendable, think on these things." (Phil. 4:8)

Recall the grace of God

Love God with your mind

Becoming like Daddy...Holy

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (Verses 14-16)

Peter moves from thinking to right living. The command is *"be holy in all your conduct."* The command has a relational basis to it. First, as children of God. That is how he begins, *"as obedient children."* When God saves us, he also adopts us. We become literally members of the family of God. God becomes our heavenly Father and we become his eternal children. So this is relational.

We are called to put our faith in action. How? Here, by living morally disciplined lives. Peter reaches into the Old Testament as a proof text. *"You shall be holy, for I am holy."* This is a quotation of a phrase that appears five times in Leviticus (11:44, 19:2, 20:26, 20:7-8). *Be holy because I am holy.* God makes his moral character the standard of moral behavior and the requirement for it.

God's holiness is the absolute moral unity of his being. John writes, *"God is light and in him there is no darkness at all."* (1 John 1:5) To emphasize this aspect of God, the angels sing over God his absolute moral uprightness, *"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty!"* (Revelation 4:8) No sin. No inclination to evil. Always totally and purely, morally good in all his thoughts and doings. God is holy.

Peter takes the ethical standard of God's character and makes it the goal of the life of the Christian. God is holy; we must be holy in all our conduct. In every category of life we should seek to be people in whom there is no darkness at all.

Lest there is confusion here, we are not holy and that is why Jesus had to die for our sin. Through justification, God declares us righteous. This is his grace. It's one thing to be holy in position, it's quite another to be holy in practice. A life of moral integrity is what every Christian should aim for. Peter makes it a command.

How? Peter says two things: first, stop living like we did when we didn't know any better in our days of spiritual ignorance. Don't conform to that old pattern. Those days had a pattern, NOT toward the will of God.

"To be holy 'as God is holy' includes a full and pervading holiness that reaches to every aspect of our personalities. It involves not only avoiding outward sin but also maintaining an instinctive delight in God and his holiness as an undercurrent of heart and mind throughout the day." (Wayne Grudem p. 79)

The new mold is based on a new relationship. God is our Father. Children naturally want to be like their dad. I am enjoying this nearly every day as a daddy of a 20-month old. If I raise my arms above my head, I'll look over and there Kiralee is holding her arms up, smiling, and hoping for my approval. She will mimic what I say. So I'll say, "I love you!" She can say, "I wov u!" The other day I was not watching my manners and chomping away loudly on some food. I looked over and she was chomping and making a loud noise while she did it.

Why does she raise her arms and mimic my words? I like to think it's because she loves me. I'm her dad. At this point at least, she wants to be like me.

Here is where verse 13 and verse 15 come together. The goal of what God is doing in each of us is godliness and Christlikeness. As I muster my mental and spiritual thoughts and energies toward loving God with my mind, the will of God increasingly is a priority and shapes my thoughts and desires. I fill my mind with God's truth. The more I think about the grace of God toward me and the love of God for me, the more my life is shaped around his will and purposes. Right thinking about God leads my desires toward righteous living for God. All of it anticipating the future goodness and grace of God yet to be experienced. Anticipation is a powerful motivator.

I remember when football season was coming up. I'd start running in the summer. I would get ready. I remember doing Bethel's 5K race. I was the pastor of the church. I didn't want to embarrass myself. I went into training and I got ready.

This is Valentine's weekend, so yes, I remember not so long ago when I was engaged to be married. After 44 years of waiting, my mind was very much on the wedding and the honeymoon. Guess what I did? I got ready. I worked out. I swam. I ran. I got a tan. Why? I was going to honeymoon with my girl and my anticipation of what was coming changed my thinking and my living.

Set your mind on the grace to come. Be holy as God is holy. Is your mind disciplined? Is your life morally diligent? Is your hope oriented toward the amazing grace of God still to come?

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