

TO PREP YOUR MIND FOR ACTION...

Work through these questions 1 Peter 1:13-16 raises.

(Pastor Kyle's sermon and Pastor Bob's commentary below will help you.)

1. Having our minds prepped for action had become a big deal for Peter. Can you recall from Peter's story, thinking that kept him from being a faithful servant of Jesus? What are some things that hinder you? What thinking in you needs to be strengthened?
2. Today there are many things we lean on to give us hope. What are some things you have thought about that are part of your "hope package?"
3. After some really great experiences, most of us have felt this: "Is that it? Is that all there is?" To what degree is this healthy and right? To what degree could it become unhealthy?
4. What have been some key achievements in your journey of holiness, victories the Holy Spirit has helped you rise to? What is something that seems to keep coming undone?
5. There is a clear linkage in Scripture between trusting Yahweh more and that growth producing growth in both holiness and hope. The story of Peter illustrates this. What are some areas you have seen recently where your trust in Jesus falters? How can you strengthen trust?

A HIGH-YIELDING, BONUS ACTIVITY

It is always good to remind yourself of what Jesus suffered so that your sins could be forgiven. Re-reading the accounts of His suffering in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John will do that for you. That's always an exercise that is high-yielding. It preps our minds for godly actions. Here is another great exercise.

This exercise is based on what we can see in the descriptions we have of Jesus' words and responses as He suffered. They were being continually shaped by thoughts from the Old Testament. And so, as He addressed His mourners on the way out to be crucified (Luke 23:27-31), what He said to them was shaped by Scriptures like Isaiah 2:12-22; 29:1-3. Other things He said as He was tortured indicate that during the entire ordeal His thoughts and responses were being shaped by Scripture. That's how He endured. His mind had been prepared by time spent knowing the Scripture.

This week read and meditate on Psalm 22 and 31, Isaiah 2 and 53. Think about how the Spirit used these to give Jesus grit for His hard mission. Think about what the Holy Spirit wants to use in these same Scriptures to strengthen you in the mission. Be inspired by the fact that the thoughts in these Scriptures work! They prep you to do much more than just survive and "get through it" even as they did Jesus!

1 PETER COMMENTARY

A number of years ago I started the habit of journaling my way through various books of the Bible. My goal was to enhance my own understanding of all God has made known to us and placed in writing. I did not try to summarize all that had been written on the verses and the subjects they dealt with. I only wanted to record what my understanding of the meaning of each key word and each phrase of the text had come to be. So you'll find the words of each verse written in bold letters as it appears in the New American Standard Version. This is followed by my thoughts on each phrase of that verse. I do not claim to be right! I do think the positions you will read all fall within the boundaries of healthy theological thought.

I did not mean for my writings to be read by the general public. That means you will find grammatical errors, etc. I simply started the habit for myself and my kids, for them to have my words on something after I hit the compost pile! My thought was, what better thing for them to hear my voice on than the things of Yahweh? It is in that spirit I share with you in the weeks ahead my understanding of 1 Peter. May my thinking on His words become a source of healthy thought and strength to you! — Bob

1:13—“Therefore, 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.”

There are “glories” that accompany salvation. There is the glory of heaven and our heavenly home, but there is the glory of experiencing the process of a changed life as well. There is a joy in an experience of pleasure and rest that awaits us in heaven. There is the glory and joy of walking with God today. Today’s walk with God consists of tackling the difficult, of struggling with and conquering challenging problems, of being stretched to one’s limit and succeeding and winning. That is the glory of the salvation process that we enjoy in this life.

Peter charges his readers with respect to how to enter in to the process that is this latter glory. His charge appears to consist of three commands in the English rendering of the text. There is really only one command, and that is the command to “fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

The statement “gird your minds for action” is a participle. It is action that must take place first, the manner one must employ to focus their hopes completely on what they should. “Girding up” was an expression used of gathering up one’s flowing robe, tucking the cloth that flowed toward the ground into one’s belt, or girdle as it was called, so that one could engage themselves more easily in physical work and activity. It transformed a flowing robe into shorts! To “gird up” one’s mind for action would be to adopt a mindset free from the things that impede responsiveness with respect to the things of the Spirit.

Many Christians have a mindset that leads to inactivity. They hear the truth that leads others to act but they do not act. It is a mind set on things that are of the earth rather than of heaven. Sometimes these are immoral and sinful by their very nature. Sometimes they are evil because they are good but not best—not God’s will for the moment. In either case they keep us from that which He wants us to do at that moment and so our minds are not girded for Godly action. We must remember that Christianity is about action. It is not just about a body of facts, though that is certainly the entry point and the rational for our focus on the eternal. We experience the glory of our salvation when we determine to act. To do so there is this pointing of our minds toward action that we need to see to. Every day we need to anticipate that God will lead us to do certain things. That is what the moments of each day are really about.

There is a second action that we must take that is prerequisite to us focusing our hopes completely on the grace to be revealed with Christ. We must have the soberness in spirit that we need to have. The word rendered “sober” spoke initially of being wine-free, but assumed a broader meaning as it was used. It came to speak of being under proper control, not given to extremes or to the whims of the wrong forces. To be sober in spirit means to give one’s entire being to the control of the Holy Spirit. It involves arresting those feelings and moods that arise within us that do not line up properly with the truth. It involves denying certain things and rejecting them as untrue or as part of the old way of living. It involves setting aside restlessness and promoting and initiating thoughts of what is pure, true and of good reputation (Philippians 4:8).

In doing these two things, girding our minds for action and being of sober spirit we prepare ourselves to execute Peter’s command to fix our hope completely on the glory that will be ours through Jesus Christ. We must intentionally embrace one thing as that which is our hope, as that which will fill, re-fill and fulfill our lives. We are, to a large degree, shaped by our hopes. What we look to for happiness, fulfillment and pleasure will have an enormous impact on what our lives become.

By commanding us to focus our hopes completely on the grace that will come to us when Christ is revealed Peter is telling us that we are to burn some bridges. There is to be a sense in which all our eggs must be in one basket so that we are hopeless if eternity is just a myth. Our hope for our lives is that which will be ours when Christ is revealed.

Our hope is not in anything related to this life. It is not in ourselves, this life's experiences, or the world's goods. Those will, in fact, fail us completely. Our health will be lost, our life's work may be lost, our loved ones may be lost, and we may wind up suffering deeply physically and emotionally. None of that touches our real treasure. That is the way we should strive to think and invest.

We must seek to implement this mindset: there is no relationship, or experience, or status, or achievement I will look to for my satisfaction or peace. Those will come to me on the day when Christ stands on earth and the divine order of things is established. Until then I will likely remain to some degree un-affirmed and unfulfilled. That mindset is the force of this command and it can be carried out only by those of sober spirit who have girded their minds for action.

1:14—"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in ignorance."

The things that keep us from action with regard to the faith, that control our spirits and that we stake our hopes to, mold and shape our lives. Left unchanged these conform us to something other than Christ. Previously we had an excuse—ignorance. When we don't know the truth we cannot be shaped by it and instead are simply shaped by life. This is where obedient children of God are distinct and unique.

Obedient children of God have one thing in common. They are not simply being shaped by their times or following the course that comes naturally. They are being conformed to a different shape, that of Christ. They are becoming more aware of the truth and responding to its implications. As a result their former way of living and thinking is becoming more and more a thing of the past.

We must remember that this is the challenge of the Christian life, expressed in a nutshell in this verse. If it happened naturally, without our diligent effort, this command and the myriads like it that fill the pages of the New Testament would not need to have been written to us. The reality is that something is required of us that allows us to experience His overwhelming grace that then enables us to rise above what would naturally be our course. It is a great discipline to ask ourselves in all situations, "What am I being conformed to?"

1:15—but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

The word "holy" is a very important word in terms of our faith. It is the word we often think of when we are describing God and it is the word that comes to mind often when we think about what we should be. When we think of holy we generally think of righteous. That is accurate to a certain degree, but only captures a little of what the word implies.

The word means to set aside when used as a verb. As an adjective it means set apart. It came to be used of things that were set aside and reserved for service to God or in the worship of God. It is the word chosen by New Testament writers to use of members of the body of Christ. The word rendered "saints" is literally "holy ones." And so when we speak of holiness we are speaking of uniqueness. "Distinctiveness" is a key part of the concept of holiness. It is a fairly straight-forward idea when we use it of things and people, because we understand that God has acted on them to set them aside and declare them reserved for His use.

It is a little more profound when we think of God as being holy. In His case no one declared Him such, He simply was and is holy. What this means is that by virtue of His essence He is wholly unique and separate from all that is. This is true of His moral makeup, what we usually think of when we think of holiness, but it is true of virtually everything about Him. When we think in terms of intelligence, power, authority, patience, love or virtually any category of traits or abilities, God is unique. There is no one or no thing like Him! When He says He is holy this is the idea. He is wholly unique, without peer in all that He is.

God is to be viewed by us, revered and treated as sacred because He is in every sense wholly unique. In every imaginable category of description, He is worlds beyond anything we can possibly conceive of. So He is not holy because He is for some reason sacred, He is sacred because He is holy, and that is an important distinction.

We are to become holy. We are to show ourselves to be “set aside” from the rest of humanity. We are to be traveling toward a way of thinking that leads to a different way of living that distinguishes us from the masses living by mere instinct. We do this as we mimic Him. His holiness is defined by His consistency within His own nature. He is holy by virtue of His essence. He is perfectly behaving in line with His perfect character at all times. Our holiness is innate only in the sense that God has joined Himself to us. It is not something we would naturally do apart from Him.

We must learn to think and behave in line with His character, through His Spirit that He has placed in us. We can become holy only because He has joined Himself to our spirits. That which is holy is now in us, and as we live by the leading of His Spirit, we will reflect His holiness. Peter can command this only because of this fundamental change in our makeup that God has brought about.

1:16—because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

The best reason for pursuing anything is that it is admonished in the Scriptures. Here Peter cites Scripture as the reason we should pursue holiness. Holiness has always been the agenda of God for His people. God desires those He has set aside as His to be a reflection of who He is and who they now are. The fact is that God’s choosing of us makes us unique (holy). We are to live in such a way that this uniqueness demonstrates itself. Our actions are to reflect the fact that we are joined to God and that we walk and talk with Him. They should reflect wisdom, restraint, righteousness, all the things we would hope to draw from being around the perfect One who has told us He will freely give us all things (Romans 8:32). There should be a noticeable beauty and order to our lives.