

# Prepared for the Journey Ahead

1 Peter 1:13-16

Over the past couple of weeks we've seen Peter encourage groups of believers who have been scattered throughout Asia Minor due to persecution. He reminds them of the LIVING HOPE to which they've been BORN AGAIN through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we've seen on recent Sundays, our entire reality as believers hinges on Jesus RISING FROM THE DEAD. We are a REDEEMED PEOPLE with NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST, and it's this new identity that causes us to cease searching for hope in this world (more on that in a moment). These believers could cease searching for anything with the appearance of hope in this temporary world because they had an IMPERISHABLE, UNDEFIABLE, and UNFADING INHERITANCE in heaven.

Peter lays out these glorious realities (and he isn't done), but then he introduces POSSIBLY THE major theme of his letter, that being the persecution that exacerbates the difficulty of living for Jesus, and the appropriate response of the believer. Like Paul who wrote it in Romans 5, Peter said that suffering and trials REFINE OUR FAITH like the furnace refines gold. James wrote that we ought to REJOICE in our trials, and Peter could say AMEN to this, having rejoiced himself after he and the Apostles took a beating for preaching Jesus.

Trials are difficult by definition and unexpected by nature, and by "nature," I actually mean OUR NATURE. People know bad things happen, but buy-in-large, most don't expect them to happen TO THEM, and that's evident by their SUBSEQUENT SHOCK AND DESPAIR when it does. Ill-prepared believers are especially prone to being discouraged and disillusioned because THEY'RE FOLLOWING THE SOVEREIGN GOD!!!

While the Lord uses trials in our lives to grow us and glorify Himself, Peter knows that the devil seeks to use them to his advantage as well. The enemy takes advantage of the difficult situation to sow doubt in us, doubt in God's character and power, with the aim of causing us to falter in our love and service for Him. Knowing that these believers still have breath in their lungs, and therefore, a journey to complete in this world, Peter seeks to PREPARE them for that journey. So, picking up in verse 13, we read...

## **1 Peter 1:13-16**

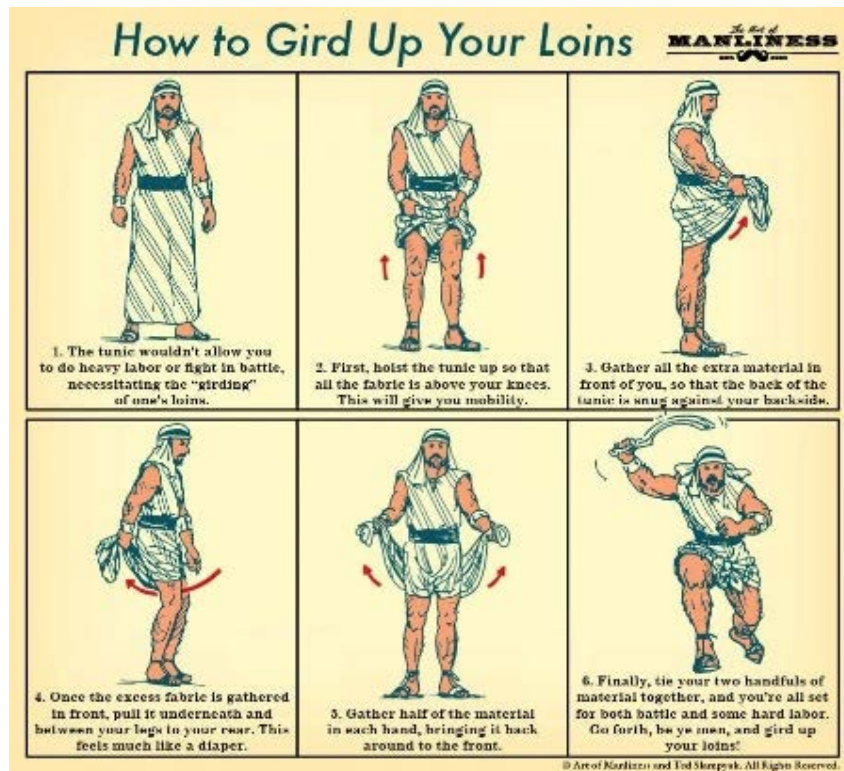
**13 Therefore,** (because of your new identity in Christ, because of the inheritance that awaits you, because of the trials you now face, because of the assurance of this hope you now have) **preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy.**

Having spent the previous 12 verses describing the reality of believers in this world, Peter now gets down to business. Like a mountain range that provides glorious vistas BOTH of what's behind and what lays ahead, "THEREFORE" stands out in Peter's letter, DIVIDING what is from what is yet to come, giving us instruction as we set out on this leg of our sojourn through the valley that is our life in this world. He says...

**1 Peter 1:13**

**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.**

In the KJV, we're told, "gird up the loins of your mind," which gives us the historical significance of "preparing your minds for action."



In fact, I found this great step-by-step tutorial for it, and I thought about asking someone to demonstrate it for us, BUT for time's sake, I'll skip that. The graphic is pretty self explanatory.

As Peter writes about being ransomed by a spotless lamb later in the chapter and a future inheritance, the Passover, Exodus, and the Promised Land come to mind. As believers, the blood of the Lamb of God covers us. The wrath of God for sin has passed over us. We've been set free from slavery to sin, and like the Israelites who ate the first Passover, we're about to be led out to the Heavenly Land God has promised to us. Regarding the eating of the Passover, Moses told his people...

### **Exodus 12:11**

**In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.**

They were to BE READY TO LEAVE! Their salvation was NEAR! Peter was telling his readers the same thing! Our departure from this world could happen any time! Be ready! LIVE READY! If you think about it, we do this in other areas ourselves. How many of you were going on a vacation, and you planned to leave out early in the morning? [Raise hands.] Where were your bags before you went to bed the night before? ALREADY IN THE CAR, RIGHT?! You were ready to go! The next morning, you just get up, get dressed, and grab a breakfast bar on your way out the door, or better yet, grab a breakfast burrito on the way!

Just as those Israelites were instructed to scarf down the first Passover, fully dressed, with bags and staffs in hand, their loins girded up, we're to make sure that the "loins of our minds" are girded up. We're to prepare our MINDS, our WAY OF THINKING AND FEELING, and isn't that usually the case any time the Scriptures exhort us to maturity? Sin begins in our minds and flows outward from there. Therefore, discipline must also begin there, not merely applying more personal effort in order to reform our actions—that's just an OUTWARD show, not an INWARD change—but SURRENDERING to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to TRANSFORM our thoughts and feelings upstream of our actions (Romans 12:1-2). This is REPENTANCE, it continues throughout our walk with Jesus, His Spirit will do the work in us, but we must give ourselves over to it.

Rather than allowing our thoughts, our feelings, our affections, and attitudes to be slack or loose like robes about the legs of someone trying to run a race, we're to seek to allow the Lord to GATHER, RESTRAIN, and DISCIPLINE our thoughts. Matthew Henry spoke of it in terms of letting the "loins" or the STRENGTH and VIGOR of our minds be exerted on our "duty," our chief purpose, that being to glorify the Lord, and our spiritual, mental preparation doesn't end there. Along with preparing our minds for action, Peter tells us that we're to be SOBER-minded. Obviously, this would include not allowing ourselves to be intoxicated with various substances; the Scriptures repeatedly admonishes such excess and debauchery. However, this phrase has even more to do with being dignified, calm and collected in spirit, temperate, dispassionate, and circumspect. Watchfulness is an attribute that is often associated with it. This phrase has a LOT to do with being controlled from WITHIN, not by outside circumstances.

Pastor Kevin gave a great example of this on Sunday. Just as Mary Magdalene wasn't thinking clearly in her grief, we don't think straight when we're hurting. We don't think straight when we're tired, lonely, hungry, or depressed, and HERE'S THE THING: we're SLOW to recognize when we're in an altered state of mind. As such, Peter tells us to be SOBER, to be vigilant not only of what's going on around us, but VIGILANT IN MIND, remaining OBJECTIVELY aware of how we're doing. The sons of Korah beautifully illustrated this practice of being sober-minded when they wrote...

### **Psalm 42:11**

**Why are you cast down, O my soul,**

**and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God.**

We have to be paying attention in order to question ourselves like that and encourage ourselves to HOPE IN GOD, which incidentally, are Peter's next instructions for us! He tells us...

### **1 Peter 1:13**

**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.**

Having prepared our minds, allowing the Lord to transform and discipline our thoughts and thereby our actions, and in soberness of mind allowing ourselves to be inwardly controlled by the Spirit within rather than outward circumstances, we're to SET OUR HOPE on the grace that Jesus is bringing when He comes for us, which oddly enough means TO WAIT.

That is the significance of his phrase "**set your hope.**" There's a WORLDLY HOPE—Pastor Dale touched on this—a hope that is UNCERTAIN, more of a WISH than an EXPECTATION. To put it another way, think of when your car has broken-down away from home. You've had that happen, right? The guys on the recent Texas-Mexico mission trip can identify. Your battery (or perhaps your alternator) has died, and you need someone to jump you off. It's one thing to "hope" that someone will stop and help you, it's another thing altogether to WAIT on the person you called and who told you that he's coming to help. One's an IF, the other's a WHEN. The first one may never happen, but that isn't "hope" in the Christian sense. Jesus said, "I'm coming," so we SET OUR HOPE on Him. We WAIT, with glorious expectation no less, because we know that our hope is CERTAIN.

Peter, however, doesn't stop there. He adds a qualifying descriptor to his inspired instruction. He writes...

### **1 Peter 1:13b**

**...set your hope FULLY on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

The Greek word for "**fully**" is a derivative of *tetelestai*, which is familiar to us. It's what Jesus said from the cross to signify that He had accomplished the Father's will. "It is finished!" "It is accomplished!" "It is COMPLETED!" "Paid in FULL." Neither Jesus' words then nor Peter's here are difficult to understand. Just as Jesus paid our sin debt IN FULL, Peter now encourages these scattered, persecuted believers to hope FULLY or SOLELY in the grace that Jesus is bringing, NOT PARTIALLY in Him and partially in the things of this world that have a semblance of security and peace.

And we're to set our hope FULLY on the GRACE that will be brought to us at the REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, the fulfillment of our salvation, I believe, to be realized at the Rapture. Paul was quick to point believers to this focus as well, and because of them, he could encourage them...

## 1 Corinthians 15:58

**Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**

Their motivation for living in such a way was their imminent departure from this world. In keeping with the traveling theme of Peter's letter, tell me, who likes to go to the beach or some other vacation? Keep your hands up. Now, who relishes the JOURNEY to the beach? [Several, if not all, hands GO DOWN.]. You mean to tell me that none of you get excited about traffic, and crazy drivers, and missed exits, and rest stops? Yeah, ME NEITHER!

"The journey" is arduous. It's long and stressful. We only choose to make it because of THE REWARD AT THE END. Our destination makes it worth it! That's how our time in this world feels. As the series title reminds us, we are SOJOURNERS. We're in transit. Things are hard in this world because of sin. Those who don't believe the way we do often wind up hating us, especially when we carry out the Commission and encourage them to follow Jesus along with us. However, Peter reminds us of our HOPE, the GRACE that Jesus is bringing us when He's revealed, something Peter has already made reference to FOUR TIMES at this point: **"A salvation ready to be revealed in the last time...praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ...the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls...the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:5, 7, 9, 13)**. Jesus is coming, He's got grace for you, and as we set our hope fully on it now, we experience that grace now as well.

What we're talking about here is PARADIGM SPIRITUALITY, the SHIFTING of our way of thinking FROM THE TEMPORARY TO THE ETERNAL, and the INSTANT REORIENTATION OF PRIORITIES that accompanies that shift. It's the reason that saints of old like Moses prayed prayers like **"Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12)**. Kenneth Boa said...

***"The great saints through the ages learned the wisdom of having only two days on their calendars: today and that day (the day they would be with the Lord). If we want a heart of wisdom, we should learn to live each day in light of that day."***

That's Peter's focus here, WHERE OUR HOPE LIES, and directing us to THAT DAY. If our hope is here in this world, then when we look around and observe the madness that surrounds us, or when we encounter persecution for speaking out against it, we're going to despair. If our hope is in possessions we can acquire, then we can also lose it; someone can take it away. True, it's literally NATURAL to find some measure of hope in the world in which we've lived all our lives; it's the only world we've ever known and seen with our eyes. However, that isn't who we are anyone. We're citizens of another world (Philippians 3:20), an incorruptible and everlasting world of peace, joy, and glory from which we await a Savior. If our hope is FIXED THERE, on THAT DAY, we'll find the endurance to soldier on TODAY. We won't be surprised by the depravity of the world; we'll see it as our mission. We won't build castles for ourselves here and look for ways to make this world Heaven. We'll travel light, holding everything we have loosely, living in tents, as it were, LOOKING FORWARD to our BLESSED HOPE.

This is powerful encouragement for these Christian exiles who had been forced to run from the homes they knew, who had likely been separated from dear loved ones by great distances or death. It's powerful encouragement for US if we'll meditate on it and ACTIVELY seek to incorporate it into our lives. Peter continues preparing us, saying...

### **1 Peter 1:14**

**As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,**

Peter's illustration of "OBEDIENT CHILDREN" is so instructive in helping us do this. Do children understand everything we tell them? Do they always understand WHY we tell them to do what we tell them to do? [NO.] We may want them to understand, and we may make every effort to help them understand, but sometimes they just don't. Do we still expect them to OBEY when they don't understand? [YES!] REALLY?!!! OBEDIENCE WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING?! Yep. And what does that require of us? TRUST. [Lyric: "Trust and obey..."] Though our children don't always understand why we instruct them the way we do, they can still bring themselves to obey us because THEY TRUST US, knowing that WE LOVE THEM and are FOR THEM.

SOOOOooooo, "as obedient children," Peter tells us, TRUSTING in the GOODNESS and the LOVE OF GOD, "do not be CONFORMED to the passions of your former ignorance..." Paul wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world" in Romans 12, and something to understand about "being conformed" is that it's PASSIVE. Neither Peter nor Paul warn against conforming OURSELVES to the world; they both warn of the insidious danger of "being conformed" either unwittingly, or worse, permissively...probably a little bit of BOTH. This is one more reason that we must be SOBER-MINDED.

Paul and Peter both tell us NOT to be CONFORMED to this world or our former way of life. Paul tells us in Romans 8 that it's the Father's will that we ARE conformed to the IMAGE OF HIS SON. The illustration that God gave Jeremiah regarding the potter and the clay was very appropriate (Jeremiah 18:6). WE ARE CLAY. God literally sculpted the first man like clay from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Our very creation is an illustration of the nature of our souls. WE ARE MOLDABLE, and WE WILL BE CONFORMED to some design or another. The question is WHOSE DESIGN? Do you see why Peter began this section exhorting us to mentally prepare ourselves? To be sober? We will be conformed to the mold of the world, a mold crafted by God's adversary according to Paul's words in Ephesians 2, or we will ALLOW ourselves to be CONFORMED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT through the PROCESS known as SANCTIFICATION into the IMAGE OF CHRIST. It's ONLY an EITHER-OR proposition. The Apostle John said as much when he wrote...

### **1 John 2:15**

**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

Something conformed to one mold can't fit into another...not without being broken first. That's why God must BREAK us because we come to Him fresh out of the world's mold, and that breaking is painful, but essential. Watchman Nee can tell you about that if you've never read him. YOU CAN'T LOVE BOTH; they're MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE. In fact, that's what it means when the Bible says that God is a JEALOUS GOD; He demands EXCLUSIVE WORSHIP (Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24).

Together, all these Apostles are saying, "*Don't be conformed to the world but to God, 'as obedient children,' love and follow your Heavenly Father!*"

The encouragement to develop RIGHT THINKING now flows into RIGHT LIVING! There is a TRANSFORMATION to be expected in the lives of people who follow Jesus, yet there also remains a SUSCEPTIBILITY to former passions because of the PERSISTENCE of the FLESH. As Peter describes over the next few verses, there must be a TANDEM RESPONSE to personal sin. In Ephesians 4 Paul describes it as a "putting off and a putting on," with mental renewal in between. Do you still struggle with sin? Sure, we all do. The sin is NOT OKAY, but the struggle is; it means you're fighting it. Holiness is a struggle because of the nature of sin. There a multitude of descriptions that Paul could've used to describe sinful desires in Ephesians 4, but the Holy Spirit led him to the most appropriate one, that being "DECEITFUL." As it was in the Garden, so it is today in our lives. One of the ways we prepare ourselves to live holy lives is by fully recognizing the GOOD aspect of sin—What?! Yes, the good aspect of sin—the fact that it LOOKS GOOD or momentarily FEELS GOOD, which causes us to "fall for it" every time if we aren't so prepared. Remember, Peter teaches us to be SOBER-MINDED, that is, DISpassionate, circumspect, and temperate; we're to be controlled by the Spirit who resides WITHIN us, not the stuff of the world around us. Spirit-controlled, NOT Stuff-controlled.

Again, this is more than merely avoiding past sinful behaviors. There must be more than the half-measure of only "putting off the old man." We as human beings do NOT exist as VACUUMS. I teach this to my kids, and to myself. We can't remove negative habits from our lives and expect our lives to remain VOID of such habits WITHOUT REPLACING THEM with good ones! I'm not going to conquer bad eating habits by simply cutting out the junk that I eat. I'LL STILL BE HUNGRY!!! I'm going to eat, and if I don't teach myself to reach for something healthy and filling, I'm going to reach for the bag of chips or candy! THERE IS NO MAINTAINING. Either love for the world is taking ground in my life, or love for the Father is taking ground in my life. PERIOD. Someone's mental reset starts THERE tonight, perhaps the reset for many of us. Again, THERE IS NO MAINTAINING. Holiness must be PURSUED, not merely assented to. For this reason, Peter is inspired to write more than "*don't go back to your old, sinful habits...*"

### **1 Peter 1:15-16**

**15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy.**

Continuing with his illustration of a child and his parent, Peter promotes a practice as familiar in the first century as it is now, that being the practice of IMITATION. Children learn and grow by imitating their

parents. For better or worse, we largely grow up to be our parents, picking up good and bad habits, and we're sometimes pleased and other times shocked when we see our behavior modeled by our own children. It's to be expected, though! Jesus said...

#### **Luke 6:40**

**A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be LIKE HIS TEACHER.**

I know I'm to blame for many of my children's bad habits. I try to be a good dad, but I'm not as good a dad as God, and I have to remind my kids of that. The great thing is, when we imitate our Heavenly Father, which is most easily conceptualized by imitating His Son, we don't have to worry about picking up bad habits. It's all HOLINESS. Specifically, HOW DO WE DO THAT? Again, by imitating the Son of God, who is the WORD. You see, the answers we learned in Sunday School as children still apply: pray and read your Bible. Carrying God's Word in your heart by memorizing it certainly doesn't hurt either. It really is that simple. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the areas in which your life doesn't line up with the teachings of the Bible. He will, and He'll change you, if you'll let Him. The One who called us to Himself is holy, and as Peter promises in his second letter—we'll get there—He's given us everything we need to obey. It's one of my favorite passages. Peter says...

#### **2 Peter 1:3-4**

**3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.**

That power and that knowledge for life and godliness comes through the Holy Spirit and the Word! As born again believers, we have everything we need to FOLLOW HIM. We just have to be DISCIPLINED.

We've got a journey ahead of us. While we've only just begun, we could find ourselves at our ultimate destination any moment. As Peter prepared these scattered, persecuted believers to stay the course by setting their hope on that destination, their ultimate salvation, so he prepares us. As we close, I have a COUPLE of questions for you...

#### **QUESTION #1**

**How much time do I spend THINKING about spiritual things?**

I'm not asking how much time you spend reading the Bible or listening to a message, but rather, how much time do you spend meditating on God's Word, taking stock of your life, and allowing the Holy Spirit to bring the two together? Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write to us that we must PREPARE OUR MINDS FOR ACTION and be SOBER-MINDED. Paul encourages us...

#### **Philippians 4:8**



**Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.**

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 is another great passage for taking control of your thoughts. Allow the Holy Spirit to help you to gather up any slack or loose thoughts in your life, and as Matthew Henry said, let the **loins** or strength and vigor of your **mind** be exerted on one's God-given purpose in life.

#### **QUESTION #2**

**In what ways do I struggle to obey God, and how am I actively allowing God to INVADE those areas of struggle?**

That isn't meant to be a beat-you-up question. I must ask myself the same question. It's too easy to vaguely say "I'm following Jesus" because we like Jesus and church makes us feel good. Following requires focus, growth demands discipline, and I believe you're here because you want that. As we already talked about we don't stop at "putting off the old man," we intentionally "put on the new man" as well. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you need to grow, and He'll not only show you, He'll bring about the growth if you'll surrender that area to him. One commentator said...

***"Though absolute holiness can never be achieved in this life, all areas of life should be in the process of becoming completely conformed to God's perfect and holy will."***

So...

#### **QUESTION #1**

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