

Feed Your Hope
1 Peter 1:13 (06/19/16)
Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, prepare 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.

I hope you are ready to roll up your sleeves and take an aggressive, focused stance for Christ. Notice the first word in our verse: "Therefore." Peter has told us all about that rich, abundant mercy God poured into our lives, from foreknowing and electing us to a living hope through Christ's resurrection, to giving us an unfading inheritance, using our trials to purify our faith, and painting a glorious picture of our future salvation. Peter is saying to us elect aliens, "You have been blessed, brothers and sisters! Now we're going to talk about how you are to live aggressively as God's chosen aliens, always staying on God's trail for your life."

Bob Jones Sr., founder of Bob Jones University, preached a sermon called "Rabbit Chasers." He talked about possum hunting in Southeast Alabama. A good possum dog will stay on the trail. A worthless cur will start out chasing a possum but when he gets a whiff of a rabbit, he'll chase after that rabbit instead of staying on the possum trail. I went coon hunting one time (and only once) in Scipio, Indiana. I met the fellows and their coon dogs around midnight and we all traipsed out to a cornfield. They released their dogs and we stood around talking about the Pacers or fishing or whatever, until we heard those coon dogs howling off in the distance. Have you ever heard coon dogs when they pick up the trail and chase that masked bandit right up a tree? It's a distinct sound. For some it seemed to be the sweetest music those hunters ever heard! When we got to the dogs, they were barking and howling and carrying on, frantically jumping up the side of that tree with their eyes set on their find. We tilted our heads back and shone the light strapped to our foreheads way up that tree and suddenly we saw two shining eyes looking down at us, begging for mercy. End of story.

Today in verse 13 Peter exhorts us; don't be sidetracked from God's path for you. Like a good coon dog, stay on the trail! For God's people whose faith is under fire, fix your hope completely on the imminent, any-moment return of Christ. One technical matter of grammar in this verse – "prepare your mind for action" and "keep sober" are both participles modifying the command "fix your hope." So, it really reads, "by having prepared your mind" and "by staying sober," fix your hope completely! What does this mean? God gives us three things to do to feed our hope and keep it burning brightly, even in this godless, dark world.

God wants you to keep your mind always prepared, ready for action – "having girded the loins of your mind." That first phrase is literally, "Gird up the loins of your mind!" In the ancient world, a runner or worker or soldier didn't go running out there with his robes flapping and flopping in the wind, tripping him all up. No, He grabbed the ends of his long robe, pulled them up, and tucked them into his belt so his legs were free to run or fight aggressively. That's what "gird up the loins of your mind means." The Jews ate the Passover meal with their loins girded so they could move out fast. In 1 Kings 18:46, Elijah girded up his loins and raced and beat Ahab back to Jezreel. In Luke 12:35 Jesus told us to "Be dressed in readiness," literally "keep your loins girded." And here Peter tells us to gird up the loins of your mind. No sloppy, floppy thinking for God's elect.

The loins are the mid-section, your gut, the seat of strength to the body. When Peter talks about the loins of your mind, he means your spiritual strength. Your faith and obedience begins in your mind. You win or lose on a daily basis in your mind. In Ephesians 6:14 Paul commands us, "Gird your loins with truth!" Truth strengthens your mind and prepares you to live your Christian life with readiness and endurance.

Today we talk about taking off your coat, rolling up your sleeves, and getting to it! You don't wear a trench coat to play football. Warriors don't head out to the battlefield in their bathrobes. No, successful action

demands you dress for the occasion. That's what Peter means. Get your mind, your thoughts, and your understanding of your faith tightened up, prepared for action. The word mind is "dia + noia", to think through stuff. Keep your mind engaged every day and throughout the day in the things of God, thinking through how God's will and promises and blessings apply to your circumstances. Then, when those trials come, you will be able to apply God's sovereignty and promises and Romans 8:28 and 1 Peter 1:6-7 to your situation.

You cannot just park your brain outside your Christian faith. In fact for me, it was when I became a Christian that I actually started to use my brain. Before Christ I went to college, but I had no interest whatsoever and dropped out. After I got saved, everything took on new meaning. I became a history major knowing that history was "His Story." I had to take remedial English and lit classes, but I loved them because God uses words and so writing the right way is important. Even biology was exciting as I learned about the Creator's designs. Greek classes had meaning as I learned how God had used Alexander the Great to spread the Koine Greek throughout the ancient world, and that same Greek is what God used three hundred years later to write the New Testament. I studied vocabulary cards and memorized declensions and parts of speech. Why? God had captured my mind!

Your thought processes under the power of the Spirit and direction of God's Word are the strength of your spiritual life. There is simply no room for passivity or mental laziness in the Christian life. You must always be ready to measure everything by God's Word. You have plenty of opportunity for that in this crazy world! Let's face it, one of the greatest reasons for no spiritual growth is lazy, passive thinking. Four hours of TV every night will not equip you to think biblically. Jimmy Fallon is funny, but he won't help you grow to become more like Christ.

Are you with me? Roll up your sleeves and keep your mind engaged and prepared for every day! Use your mind to think through and apply God's truth to your circumstances. Think biblically, think biblically, think biblically! Be sure you have a consistent intake of God's Word! Many people don't even know what their church believes. Even worse, they don't care. That is inexcusable. You need to know what your church believes about everything. That's one reason FBC has a Newcomer's Class. If the occasion arises where you must search for another church, make sure you know what it believes and if they teach what they believe. If you are currently attending another church, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Christian, find out what it believes and teaches. What does its doctrinal statement say? Then compare that to the Bible. Study books that will inform you what is required for a church to be biblical. Peter tells us to get our minds working so we can think through life from a biblical perspective.

God wants you to keep your mind under control – "Keep sober in spirit." That's a present tense participle. Keep on being sober all the way through to the end. Sober means the opposite of being intoxicated or drunk. Don't be an inebriated Christian. You wouldn't want a drunken heart surgeon doing a triple by-pass on you. Sober also means staying level-headed. There are plenty of Christians who if you would put a carpenter's level to their minds, the bubble would be way off-center. They are like that double-minded man in James 1:6-7 who is tossed here and there by the waves or like those children in Ephesians 4:14 who are tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, and by craftiness in deceitful scheming. They change their beliefs like the weather vane changes direction, depending on the wind.

Keep on being sober. A Spirit-filled Christian is not a loon or wacko. He is a man in full control of himself. The last fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23 is "self-control." Just because something appeals to your feelings or sounds really cool doesn't mean you should go after it. Stay level-headed. Keep your mind's level bubble in the middle. Keep your discernment active. Don't be carried away by all kinds of prophetic fads, date setting, conspiracy theories, visions and messages from God, secret codes embedded in the Hebrew Old Testament, and all the rest. In recent years many ran after the charismatic chaos, then the seeker church philosophy, then the emergent church, then the cool-factor of so many high profile dudes. The bubble is way off center! Some are so off balance that they become totally disillusioned with the whole Christian thing.

Some folks lack control and will let their hearts get consumed with the worries of this world. They become like Martha, filled with activity, banging plates around, rushing to turn down the oven, or forgetting to take the spaghetti off the burner. They are in a flurry of activity, but not sitting down to learn like Mary! Worries and distractions – they are killers! Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious about many things – your mind is all torn apart in all directions.” That’s what “anxious” means. When you find yourself going there, stop. Just stop. Sit down. Open your Bible. Quiet your heart and mind by praying and spending time in God’s Word. Get that bubble back in the middle. We need zeal and passion, but we need godly, biblically informed thinking for our zeal to be useful, like a power train that stays on the tracks. Don’t get derailed. Stay on God’s trail.

God wants you to be filled with eager anticipation of Christ’s imminent return – “Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Peter is saying this, “Remember, this world is not your home!” You are aliens here. You’ve got an incredible inheritance waiting for you, reserved in heaven for you! Are you looking forward to the great unveiling of Christ? Are you eagerly waiting for Him? Paul says in Philippians 3:20, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ?” In 2 Timothy 4:8 Paul says we ought to love His appearing.

This is what Peter is driving at in this verse, “Fix your hope.” Have you ever live south of Tennessee? Down there they are “fixin’” to do everything. “I’m fixin’ to wash my car” or I’m fixin’ to mow my lawn.” Peter says, Fix your hope. How much? Not just a little, not just a lot, but completely! Without reserve! Without quitting! All the way to the end! Ah Christian, don’t fix your hope in this world; it will totally mess you up. Live every day in this world, today and tomorrow and the next day, constantly looking forward to and eagerly anticipating Christ’s return for you, His bride! How easy to seldom think of this. And yet, either by death or by the rapture, at any split second you could be in His glorious presence! And listen, a man or woman whose hope is not in this world but in seeing Christ will be a much better Christian, a better spouse, parent, worker, and citizen. “Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself just as He is pure. We shall see Him as He is!” (1 John 3:2-3).

How are we getting there? Not by our works, not because we’ve been such good Christians. Fix your hope completely on “the grace being brought to you.” That’s in the present tense. Every day God is delivering packages of grace to you for you to keep your hope fixed on Christ. He never fails in His delivery. Remember, you were justified by grace alone, right? You are now being sanctified by grace, although you are aggressively obeying God. But even that is accomplished by God’s grace at work in you every day. And here, God is going to bring you final grace at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Grace means we don’t deserve final salvation. You may have messed up and are troubled. “Will He actually receive me after how I’ve made a mess of things? I’ve messed up my marriage. I’ve not been a good father. I still struggle with lustful thoughts. I don’t deserve to go to be with Jesus!” Jesus says, “You are absolutely right! But listen up. I’m going to receive you to myself by grace. When I descend from heaven with that shout and voice of the archangel and trumpet of God, I’m going to snatch you up into the air to meet you and take you to My Father’s house and it is all by pure, undeserved, sovereign grace! You may not feel worthy, but rejoice in Me and fix your hope completely in Me! I’m coming for you!”

SO WHAT?

So how do you feed your hope? Grab all those loose thoughts and tuck them into your belt. Get your thoughts focused on pleasing God. Keep your mind filled with God’s truth. Stay sober, level-headed. Don’t get swept away with weird and wacky teachings or let this world fill your heart with anxiety and distractions. Fix your hope completely on that final package of grace God is bringing you when Jesus comes for you. It could be today.