

I want to read something called the “The Paradox of Our Time.” It is my understanding this was originally written by Dr. Bob Moorehouse, but later it was modified by an anonymous Columbine High School student.

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice.

We write more, but learn less; we plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait; we have higher incomes, but lower morals; we have more food, but less appeasement; we build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication; we've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships. These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology has brought this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to make a difference, or to just hit delete...

Is this us? Is this how we behave? Is this what our lives look like? I bring this up because how we live our lives is largely the result of what we believe. We do what we do because of what we believe, and this prompts a question that I want to

explore with you this morning. **What do we really believe and how should we respond?**

We have been in **1 Peter** for a few weeks now, and if you recall, Peter wrote a letter to some churches in Asia Minor who were dealing with severe persecution and suffering. Peter sent them a very encouraging letter, reminding them that despite their very difficult circumstances, they were a chosen people – born-again according to the foreknowledge of God. They have a living hope in a living Savior. As an element of their salvation, they have an inheritance reserved for them in heaven, and they are under God’s protective custody in this life. Last week we learned that their faith was not based on some elaborate fairy tale, rather their faith was based on divinely inspired unchangeable truth – truth from Old Testament prophets whose predictions about Jesus were completely accurate, and truth from the eye witness accounts of New Testament apostles, like Peter, who walked and talked with Jesus. These apostles were willing to be tortured and executed for what they said they witnessed. And on top of that, these believers have a personal relationship with Jesus – a gracious salvation that even fascinates the angels.

Now as we come to our passage this morning, Peter tells his readers that their beliefs about their future, their beliefs about their salvation, and their beliefs about Jesus should have an impact on their behavior. In other words, they need to live out what they believe – and that goes for you and me as well.

So, turn with me to **1 Peter 1**, and we are going to start with **verse 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.

This is transitional verse where Peter moves us from hope (*what we believe*), to a life of holiness (*how we behave*). And just so you know, holiness means to be *set apart*, and we will discuss that further in a little later.

If you noticed in **verse 13**, Peter begins with the word “**therefore**.” That word “**therefore**” is an important word that can be translated as “*for this reason*,” and when we see that word “**therefore**,” we should automatically direct our attention back to the previous verses for the reason. That’s what the word “**therefore**” is there for. So, in doing that, we might say, because we have been born again to a living hope, because we have an inheritance kept for us in heaven, because we are protected by the power of God, because we know our trials have a purpose in our

lives, because we know the truth about Jesus, because of what Peter has already told us in the previous passages – now we are to **prepare our minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix our hope** – all of which pertains to a life of holiness – being set apart.

Now, let's talk about this verse for a moment. I wrestled with the construction of this verse for quite some time because, depending on your translation, it sounds like we are given three separate and equal commands by Peter, but in the Greek text, the main command, the driving force in this verse is to **fix your hope** or **set your hope**. That's the command here, but when it comes to the two participles – that being to **prepare your minds** and to **keep sober in spirit**, they support the main command, they lead to it, they essentially become part of it. I like how this verse reads in the NIV – and it goes like this:

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

I think this is a clearer presentation because the main emphasis in the verse is focused on the command to **set your hope**, or to **fix your hope**.

Okay, let's break this passage down a bit. Peter says to **prepare your minds for action**. In some of your translations, it may read, *gird up the loins of your mind*, which is the literal Greek rendering. I will admit, that's seems a little awkward – *girding up the loins*, but here's the picture behind this figure of speech that might be helpful.

Men in those days wore long outer robes, and when it was time for work, or they needed to run, or if they had to fight, the men would tuck their robes into their waist belts so their long robes wouldn't get in the way and hinder them, or cause them to trip. That's what *girding up the loins* means, but to give you a timelier example, today we might use the expression, "*it's time to roll up your sleeves*," – meaning it's time to get to business, it's time to get serious, and in context – when it comes to this matter of holiness, it's time to get serious about your thought life.

As I said earlier, what you believe largely determines how you behave. Everything starts in the mind. Before you act a certain way – either good or bad, you first had to think about it. Every sin has two actions: the first is in your mind (*you thought about it*), and the second one in your behavior. So, to **prepare your minds for action** means we shouldn't allow sinful thoughts to roam freely or to hang loose like a long dangling robe; otherwise, our thoughts can hinder us, they can entangle

us, and they can influence our behavior. We need to get serious about our thought life. Martin Luther said, *“You can’t keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair.”*

He’s absolutely right. All of our problems start between our ears, so we need to gather our thoughts and deal with sin at the thought level before it becomes a behavioral issue. Deal with your thoughts the instant you have them, confess them, and replace them with thoughts that are pure, and just, and good, and true. **Prepare your minds for action** – in other words, we need to get serious about what we think about and what we allow to enter our minds, especially in a world full of outright deception, rampant confusion, and moral decay. We need get serious about this.

Peter also tells us to **keep sober in spirit**. Being sober literally means, *“not drunk”* but obviously Peter’s use here has a spiritual application for us. In context, Peter is telling us to be alert, to be clear-headed, and to be self-controlled. We might say, *“we need to stay on our toes spiritually.”* This suggests discipline doesn’t it, and it requires guidance from the Holy Spirit so we aren’t exposing ourselves to anything that could cloud our judgment. And when the Spirit convicts you that something is wrong or will be harmful to you – you need to pay attention and be obedient.

So, as we get serious about our thought life, staying on our toes spiritually – for they go hand in hand, Peter gives us the main command, **fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

What is Peter saying here? We are to trust God for our future. We are to expect that God will do in the future what He said He will do – that’s what **hope** means. **Hope** is just like faith, but with an outlook towards the future. Peter tells us we are to put our hope completely in the gracious salvation that will be received in the future when Christ returns. That’s the main emphasis here. Because God has given us this great gift of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, Peter says, **fix your hope** on the One who has saved you – Jesus, who is grace personified, grace in a body – who will be fully revealed in the future.

And in the context of persecution and suffering, Peter is also encouraging his readers by implying – *you’ve already experienced some of God’s gracious salvation, but that’s just the tip of the iceberg! Just hang on through the trials and the hardships, and focus on the truth that God is going to bless you far beyond what you can ever imagine when Christ comes back again – so trust God for your future – fix your hope.”*

Now, I want to ask a question. If we really trust God for our future, if our hope is truly fixed on Jesus, if we expect Him to return one day, if we genuinely believe what we claim to believe – shouldn't that influence the way we live? Shouldn't that impact how we behave?

A father told his young son that it was time to get ready for Sunday School. They would be leaving in just a few minutes. Now, you know how little boys can be, they can be inquisitive, so the boy asked his dad, "Did you go to Sunday School when you were a boy?" The father gladly answered, "Well, yes I did." The boy looked disappointed as he said, "It probably won't do me any good either!"

That probably stung a little bit – but what we believe should influence our behavior, and this brings us to **verse 14**.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

In a nutshell, Peter is beginning to make the case that hope (*what we believe*) leads to holiness (*how we behave*), explaining that if you claim you belong to a holy God, if you claim He is your heavenly Father and you are His child – then don't act the way you used to act.

Before you knew God, you didn't really know any better – Peter says you were ignorant, but now that you belong to Him, now that you know better, then don't slip back into your old way of life. Stop doing what you used to do and start acting like children of God, children of obedience. That's what holiness looks like – children who want to look like their Father. If you are truly a child of God, there should be a family resemblance to your Father, and if your idea of resemblance means you act one way on Sunday and are completely different the rest of the week, then my friend, you got some serious soul-searching to do. If your life is no different than the way you used to be, then you need to ask yourself some really hard questions – beginning with: **What do I really believe?**

Peter continues and tells us in **verses 15-16**:

¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

I have mentioned the word "holiness" a few times, **but what does it all mean?**

As I said earlier, holiness means to *set apart*. That's what it means, and when it comes to the holiness of God, it describes *absolute perfection* which makes Him unlike any other, separate, completely set apart. God is in a class all by Himself, for there is nothing and no one who can compare to Him. He is distinct. He is sacred. He is holy.

Since God is holy, and we identify with Him as His children, we are to be just like our Father – holy. That's what God desires from us. He says, **“You shall be holy, for I am holy.”** We should be like the One we identify with.

It is said that in the days of Alexander the Great, a soldier was charged and tried for desertion in battle. The Emperor heard about it and called the young soldier in. Alexander heard the charge, and then he asked the soldier his name. The soldier replied, “My name is Alexander, sir.” With that the Emperor looked him sternly in the eye and said, “Soldier, change your behavior or change your name.”

“You shall be holy, for I am holy.” When I hear that my mind goes in two different directions. One direction is the positional perspective and the other is the practical application.

Positionally, as born-again believers, we are *in Christ*. To be *in Christ* does not mean to be inside Christ, as tools are in a toolbox or our clothes are in a closet. A better description is that we are spiritually united to Christ, as an arm is united to the body or a branch is united to a tree. The expression *in Christ* describes our connection – our relationship with Christ as believers. It means to be so united to Him that all the experiences of Christ become the believer's experiences. Therefore, His death for sin is the believer's death; His resurrection is the believer's resurrection, and *in Christ*, His holiness is our holiness. Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 1:30**,

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

In Christ, positionally, because He is holy, we are holy, and because we are holy, we just need to act like it. We need to act like who we truly are – we are to be holy. If that is confusing, consider this.

I have a large red maple tree in my front yard. I planted it years ago as a small sapling. As it grew, it didn't get any “maplelier.” A maple tree is a maple tree. It simply matured into what it currently is, a full-grown red maple tree. So, in the

same way, we are holy, that's who we are *in Christ*, now we just need to grow up and act like it, and that leads me to the practical application.

What does holiness look like for you and me? Holiness for us also means to be *set apart*, but in a practical sense, it speaks to the quality of being different. We are to be different, not necessarily odd or weird different, but different from those who live according to the ways of this world. Our present lifestyle is to be different from the unbelievers around us, and to get a little personal, we are also be different from the way we used to be, and that should be evident in the way we live our lives. We should be different – our normal lives should be characterized by holiness, and by doing so we bring credit to the Lord. By our behavior, we want others to think well of Him, especially those who do not know Him.

Because we trust God for our future, because we have hope, because Jesus is coming back again – our lives should be different. Hope leads to holiness.

There is an old hymn entitled “*Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*” and the words to this hymn seem to coincide with what Peter has been saying to those who are suffering. Listen to this:

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!*

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

*Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
Over us, sin no more hath dominion—
For more than conquerors we are!*

*His Word shall not fail you—He promised;
Believe Him, and all will be well:
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!*

Source Material:

Holman New Testament Commentary, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude – Max Anders, David Walls
Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible – David Brown, A.R. Fausset, Bobby Jamieson
James, 1, 2 Peter & Jude, The Randall House Bible Commentary – Robert E. Picirilli & Paul V. Harrison
Exposition Commentary – Warren Wiersbe
Get Your Mind in Gear – Ray Pritchard
Faithlife Study Bible - Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Bomar, D.
Notes on the New Testament: James to Jude – Albert Barnes
The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Walvoord & Zuck
Enduring Word – David Guzik