

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

## An Expository Journey Through 1Peter 1Peter 1:13-16

### 11-Pursuing Holiness by Hoping in Grace

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December 3, 2017

#### 1Peter 1:13-16

**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.

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

**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.***"

To the Glory of God

Now beginning with verse 13, the Apostle Peter has left his "Introduction" in verses 1&2, he has finished his ten-verse "Exultation" of Sovereign Grace in verses 3-12, and he is now beginning the *didactic* or the *inspired teaching* portion of this magnificent Epistle.

Now, it is helpful for us to remember that Peter is *not* teaching third-year seminary students in a classroom setting. The Apostle is being moved upon by God the Holy Spirit to edify, encourage, strengthen, bless, and rebuke the suffering saints that are reeling under the intense persecution at the vicious hand of the Roman Emperor, Nero. Back in verse 1, Peter calls his *immediate* audience "scattered aliens", and as we have already discovered, these believers, who will remain unknown to us until we meet them in Glory, were "scattered" due to the wickedness that God had sovereignly *allowed*. But they were made "aliens" by the sovereign Call that God had *purposefully* placed on their lives to "**call them out of darkness and into His marvelous Light**" (1Peter 2:9).

But please notice that, beginning here with verse 13, Peter is *not* instructing these pilgrims and strangers, who were living under intense persecution, in the same way that many believers are being instructed today by the leaders of the “modern church”. For example, Peter doesn’t mention anything here how these believers can become “financially prosperous” or how they may gain “Divine Health” or how they can operate in the “Prophetic Anointing” (whatever that is), but rather, how they may remain “holy”. And this tells us volumes about both God and real, sure-nuff Christianity.

*Evidently*, it is very important to God that His people are holy, that they are “set aside” for His use, and that they are “distinct” from the lost world in how they think and in how they behave. *Evidently*, it is high on God’s List that those, who lay claim to be born again, are *not* caught up and enticed with the sin and the pleasures of this fallen world. *Evidently*, it means a lot to God that those who lay claim to belong to Jesus maintain a godly “separation” in their own hearts and minds, and way of life from those who know not God. And *evidently*, being persecuted, having your homes and earthly possessions, and livelihood forcefully taken from you, are *not* reasons that genuine believers can use to *stop* their pursuit of Holiness.

According to the Apostle Peter, persecution and suffering are *not* excuses that people can use as to why they are *not* actively and ongoingly hungering and thirsting after Righteousness. Experiencing hardship by the hands of wicked men should *not* stop us from panting after God as the deer pants after the water-brooks. And suffering, in all of its many variations, is *not* something that should delay or stop or hinder our eager, earnest, and fervent seeking after the very Face of God. And I can say all this because it is the very first thing that God moved upon Peter to teach in this Epistle.

So, what is infinitely important, what is vital, what stands in “first place” to teach believers, who are suffering intense persecution and who are going through intense suffering, is to encourage them to strive for and to maintain Biblical Holiness.

And in this Passage, Peter teaches here that there are several ways these believers can strive for and maintain this Biblical Holiness:

- 1. prepare your minds for action.**
- 2. keep sober *in spirit*.**

**3. fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

... and then Peter gives us two "ways" or two "methods" or two "means" through which we may accomplish those three things:

- 1. do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours in your ignorance.***
- 2. be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior.**

.. and then, finally, Peter tells us that the Basis, or the Reason, or the underlying Purpose as to *why* we should struggle against the lusts of our flesh, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture, all to the Glory of God, and that is:

**like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves... because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."**

Now keep in mind that the *reason* these people are being persecuted in the first place is because they have *already* been pursuing Holiness to some extent, and they stand out from the average Roman citizen. It is precisely because the believers of Rome in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century *already* did not talk like the others, and because they *already* didn't act like the others, and because they *already* didn't think like the others or behave like the others, as to why they were being persecuted.

So, striving to obey Jesus, striving to obey Scripture, striving to please God in all things is the very reason these people were singled out for persecution in the first place. And now the Apostle is encouraging them to keep on doing what got them in hot water to begin with? Really? That is the anointed Teaching from God?

What does Peter think will happen if these pilgrims and strangers *continue* to do what *caused* their persecution in the first place? Does he really think things will get "better"? Does he think that pursuing Holiness will cause their suffering to stop? Is Peter trying to convince these "scattered aliens" that by doing exactly what singled them out for persecution to begin with, that they will somehow become *more* attractive to the Romans or more welcomed in the Empire?

No, he doesn't think that at all. Peter doesn't think things will magically get better as long as these saints continue to pursue Holiness. So, why is he telling them to do just that? Isn't that suicide? If obeying Peter here is *not* going to make their lives on earth measurably better, then why in the world would he teach this? Because Peter wants these followers of Jesus, who have already suffered so much, to be able to go to Heaven and see God.

You see, Peter understood, what many in the "modern church" seem not to understand, that going to Heaven and being in the Presence of God forever, is *the* single most important thing in all the world. Nothing else even comes close to how important this is. And that is why, 1,000 years before Jesus was born, King David wrote this in **Psalm 16:11b**:

**... In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

The best and the highest and the very zenith of Happiness is *not* found in anything on earth that was made and that is passing away. The "fullness of Joy" is found in only one location: the Presence of God. And Pleasures that you cannot even imagine and that never end, Pleasures that go on forever, and that never diminish and that never fade away are only found in one single location: at God's "Right Hand".

So, if you really desire to be happy, you must *reject* the lie that the world tells you. You must categorically *harden your heart* against the falsehood that lost people preach. You must *close your* mind to the deception that the evangelists of the fallen world system peddle to you, and you must deny *yourself*; and you must take up your cross, and you must follow Jesus.

Because, you cannot find the fullness of Joy by smoking marijuana. That isn't true. That is a lie. Getting "high" does not help anyone. It doesn't make you a "better person", that isn't true. Getting high deceives you into destroying yourself. No one finds everlasting Pleasure by drinking alcohol. And you cannot find the fullness of Joy or Pleasures forever in sex or money or power or the accumulation of earthly possessions either. You will only find the fullness of Joy and you will only find Pleasures that never end in the Presence of God.

And that is why *losing* Heaven and *not* being in the Presence of God forever is the single *worst* thing that could ever happen to anybody. God used frightening language in the Bible on purpose to convey the single most horrific event in all the Universe, human beings, who refused to repent and who refused to find Joy and Pleasure in Jesus, are thrown headlong into a lake of fire that burns with brimstone forever. And once there, there is no escape, no time off, no vacation. You are tormented day and night, along with the devil and his angels, in an immortal body that cannot die. And you will scream in agony throughout the eons of time because you refused to take Joy and Pleasure in the most Beautiful and the most Worthy and the most Valuable and the most Glorious Being in the Universe, Jesus Christ.

So, pursuing Holiness on purpose is not optional. Striving for Biblical Holiness is *not* something that *some* believers do, while others, who are equally saved, just choose not to participate in. And Holiness is not about gaining or losing some peripheral rewards in Heaven either.

No, being holy is about going to Heaven in the first place. You see, contrary to what many believe today, Holiness is *mandatory*. Pursuing Holiness on purpose is part and parcel to what it means to be born again. It is what *all* saved people do. Here is what the writer of **Hebrews** said about us pursuing Holiness in **Hebrews 12:14**:

**Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.**

No human being will see God, they will *not* go to Heaven at all unless they pursue what he calls here “**Sanctification**”. Now the word “Sanctification” here is an English translation of the Greek word “*hagiasmos*”, which means: *consecration and purification; the effect of consecration and sanctification of heart and life.*<sup>1</sup> And the word “**pursue**” here comes from a Greek word that means: *to run swiftly and continuously in order to catch.*<sup>2</sup>

So, believers are commanded to “run swiftly and continuously in order to catch consecration and purification, and the effect that consecration and

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<sup>1</sup> Strong's #38; from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Strong's #1377 from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

sanctification has on their hearts and lives, so they may prove that their conversion experience was genuine and they may go to Heaven and see God". And you can slice this and dice it any way you want to, and you still come up with the same thing:

All believers are commanded to pursue Holiness.

And *evidently*, to Peter, the prospect that *some* of these people, who are suffering unimaginable evil, might be deceived about their Salvation and think that they can skip over this Divine Command to "be holy" because their very lives are at risk, was so great, that he begins the inspired Teaching part of his Epistle with the reminder that Holiness is mandatory.

And then Peter reminds them that pursuing Holiness is mandatory because it is fundamentally Who God Himself is. Peter said:

**But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves... because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."**

So, in "Alabama English", those who desire to be "with" God, must be "like" God. Now we must be cautious here because we are *not* to be "like" God in *every* aspect. For example, we are *not* to be "like" God in His Deity. There is only one God, and then there is that which has been created. And we are part of that which has been created. And so, we will *always* live and move and operate *subservient* to God. Therefore, *any* Teaching that, in *any way*, suggests that human beings can become deity are satanic and are blasphemous.

And we are also not to be "like" God in His pristine Righteousness. So, even though it is true that our human righteousness *periodically* rises to the level of being a "filthy rag"<sup>3</sup> (**Isaiah 64:6**), that is as "righteous" as we may get by and through our own will-power and human effort. So, our righteousness being a "filthy rag" is when we are doing everything *properly*, when we are at our *best*. It does *not* describe us in our sin and disobedience. In order to be with God in Heaven, we need a "*perfect* Righteousness", a "*spotless* Righteousness", and human beings simply *can't* manufacture that degree of Righteousness.

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<sup>3</sup> Strong's 5708; a used menstruous cloth

So, the Righteousness that allows us to go to Heaven is an "*external* Righteousness", it must come from "outside" of us. It must be an "*alien* Righteousness" in that it is not inherent of fallen humanity. So, if any of us is to be in God's Presence at all, we need the Righteousness that Jesus *earned* by living a sinless Life for 33-1/2 years. And that perfect, sinless, spotless Righteousness of Jesus is imputed to us by the agency of "faith alone", and *not* by us partaking of the Sacraments or by us going through the Rite of Penance.

So, the moment we repent and trust in Jesus (because we have already been born again), God the Father takes the perfect Righteousness of Jesus Christ and He "imputes" or "credits" that Righteousness to us, because we believe, alone.

So, at that point, we take on a "dual status" before God. We are *personally* still sinful, precisely because we still are *not* perfectly obedient to God in thought, word, and deed 24 hours every day and 7 days every week. But *legally* or *spiritually*, we are perfectly Righteous, because the Righteousness of Jesus has draped over us. So, this is also a "*legal* Righteousness" or a "*forensic* Righteousness". And back in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, this "dual status" of being "legally righteous" while also being "personally sinful" was summarized by the Reformers by the Latin phrase:

Simil iustus et Peccator (Simultaneously Just [Righteous] and Sinful)

So, the Righteousness that allows human beings to enter into heaven and be in God's Presence is *not* our *own* righteousness. It is *never* our own. It doesn't belong to us, it is *credited* to us by faith alone. Therefore, any Teaching that, in any way, suggests that human beings are able to reach a state of "sinless perfection" in this life and on this earth are equally satanic and blasphemous.

We are also *not* to be "like" God in how we engage the lost world. For example, many people today believe that when Jesus said:

**John 14:12**

**"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father.**

Now some wayward souls teach that the word “**greater**” here means: *more important*. It doesn't. No human being could *ever* be “more important” than Jesus, and no one could ever “do” anything as “great” as He. This word comes from a Greek word that means: *intensity and degree; pervasiveness and extent*. So, this statement merely reflects the reality that Jesus' immediate audience when He was in His First Advent was a handful of Jews in a single nation while the Church will minister the very same Gospel to the entire world.

Now, we are commanded to be “like” God in our *holiness*, in that we are called and chosen and forgiven and washed and dedicated and consecrated and “set aside”, so that we may live our lives with abandon to display the Glory of God's Grace to the world and to prove that Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe.

Now notice that Peter begins verse 13 with the word “**Therefore**”. And this is a legal term that is used frequently throughout the 27 Books of the New Testament. And this word has to do with *everything* that Peter has been talking about in the *preceding* twelve verses. And the way you need to understand what Peter is saying here is to look at it as a legal declaration where the Apostle is saying:

**WHEREAS** (or SINCE IT IS TRUE) that I am an Apostle of Jesus Christ, And,

**WHEREAS** you are aliens, who have been scattered into the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire, And,

**WHEREAS** God has chosen you for Salvation through the Foreknowledge of God the Father, the sanctifying Work of God the Holy Spirit, unto the obedience of Jesus Christ, And,

**WHEREAS** God's Grace and Peace are yours to the fullest measure, And,

**WHEREAS** I am so overwhelmed by God's Grace that I am going to take ten verses to describe my Exultation of God's Grace. Now

**THEREFORE,**

... and Peter then gives these persecuted believers, and us, some inspired Instruction and Teaching on *how* they may prove that their Salvation is genuine by pursuing Holiness in, by, and through the means that he gives in these three verses.



In other words, because everything that Peter has been talking about through verse 12 is true, now THEREFORE, we are to *respond* to that Truth by the Grace of God and through the Power of the Holy Spirit by *obeying* the inspired Teaching given in verses 13-16.

So, the first thing that comes to believers is not Action, but Truth. The Divine Truth about Who God is and What God has done, always, always, always comes first. And *after* we have been exposed to that Truth and have analyzed it and examined it and tasted it and eaten it and digested it and we believe it, then and only then do we *act* on that Truth and "do" something. "Doing" something before knowing "who", "what", "where", "why" and "when" is *always* counter-productive to the believer, long term.

And God knows that. And so, God never expects "blind obedience". The only ones who demand that people obey without hesitation or question are false teachers and satan. Even God Himself said:

### **Isaiah 1:18**

**"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool."**

God wants His people to understand *what* they believe and *why* they believe it. And that is precisely why Divine Revelation was given to Man through words that were written down in 66 Books. God wants our minds as well as our hearts engaged. And so, just like God uses fallen sinners to bring Himself Glory, God uses nouns and verbs and prepositional phrases and adverbs and adjectives to make Himself and His Ways known to His people. **1Samuel 3:21** says that the Lord revealed Himself to the Prophet Samuel through:

**... the Word of the Lord.**

And ever since God completed His Revelation to Mankind with the completion of John's final Revelation of Jesus Christ, everything that God wanted to reveal to us, He did. And so, in our day, we come to know God and His Ways through the 66 Books of the Holy Bible.

Now there is no doubt that Christianity involves the world that is unseen and separate from our natural five senses. But *unlike* the Gnostics and the Eastern mystics and the mystery religions of Babylon, Christianity also involves the mind and cognitive thought and reasoning. And therefore, we must be taught inspired, inerrant, Divine Truth *first*. And Divine Truth does not come to people *individually*. We learn Divine Truth that very *same* way that believers who sat under the Ministry of Peter learned it, by hearing and believing the Words of Christ.

We must understand, in an age where everyone says that Jesus must become our "own *personal* Savior", that Christianity is *not* a "Designer Religion" where everybody has a *unique* way of hearing from God. They don't. We hear and believe the very *same* way that Christians for 2,000 years have heard and believed, in, by, and through Scripture.

And once we have *heard* that Truth, we must *believe* that Truth, which is a gracious Gift from God. And only then are we able and willing to respond to that Truth by going forth and obeying that Truth, and bringing Glory to God.

So, Peter does *not* begin this Epistle with Instructions of what the believers are supposed to "do". He *begins* with Teaching about what the saints are supposed to "believe". And not until we get to verse 13 does Peter begin to instruct the persecuted and suffering saints on what to "do" to pursue and maintain Holiness by saying, "**THEREFORE**".

Now as he progresses through verses 13, Peter then gives three specific instructions to the scattered aliens:

- 1. prepare your minds for action**
- 2. keep sober *in spirit***
- 3. fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

.. so let's look at each one of these.

## **1. Saints Who Pursue Holiness Must Prepare Their Minds for Action**

**1Peter 1:13a**

**Therefore, prepare your minds for action...**

So, since everything I've told you about myself and about God and about your Calling and about your Salvation is true, now, **THEREFORE, prepare your minds for action.**

Now, in the original Greek, this phrase has to do with a person wearing a flowing garment and tucking the garment into his belt so that he can run and move about freely and quickly without tripping over his clothes, because back in the Bible days, people wore robes. And when you ran, the robe would bunch up and trip you. And that's why soldiers in battle wore much shorter skirts. Long, flowing robes are impractical in a battle.

But when everyday people wanted to run or wanted to hurry to get somewhere, they "girded up" their garments, meaning they would gather them up from the bottom into a manageable bunch so they could run without tripping. And they called this action "girding up your loins" or "girding your loins".

But here, the part of you that is to be freed by this "bunching" or this "girding up" is your *mind*. So, instead of "girding up your loins", Peter tells us to gird up the "the loins of *your mind*." Or **prepare your minds for action.**

Now how do we do that? How do we "gather up our minds" so that we don't trip and fall in battle? Our minds take in everything that we see with our eyes and everything we hear with our ears and everything we touch with our fingers, everything we smell with our noses and everything we taste with our tongues. But unlike other created beings, human minds *also* have cognitive thoughts and reasoning capabilities. So, in addition to what we see, hear, taste, smell, and feel, we also think.

So, to "prepare our minds for Action" would have to do with us *minimizing* ungodly influences and *maximizing* godly ones. It would have to do with us *not* "buying in" to the world's logic, and *not* allowing our minds to dwell on thoughts that are either impure or destructive. So, this involves a *disciplined approach* to life that allows our minds to dwell on Divine Truth rather than fallen lies. And this is why the Apostle Paul said:

## **Philippians 4:8**

**Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.**

... which will *eliminate* a lot of what is on television and the internet.

So, this is basically an inspired Instruction to believers to be *discerning* about what goes into their eyes and ears, and what kind of thinking they allow themselves to engage in. And this is not a new Command. Jesus Himself said that, in addition to loving the Lord our God with all our hearts and souls, and strength, we were to love the Lord God with:

**... all your mind.**

If it is true that we are saved by what we “believe in” and what we “trust in” and what we “confess”, and *not* by what we “do”, and if it is true that we must believe *before* we act, and if it is true that “faith comes by hearing”, and if it is true that God wants us to know *what* we believe and *why* we believe it, and if it is true that the human mind is involved in all of that, then what goes into our minds is very important.

Now the “Action” that we are supposed to prepare our minds for, is whatever God may require of us at that moment. And that could include anything from everyday obedience to some very important task that God tells us to carry out. And so, Peter is reminding these scattered aliens, and us, that if our minds are filled with junk and useless and destructive or sinful concepts, we will be hindered or even eliminated from the “Action” that God requires of us. People who are constantly involved in sinful, worldly, or even mindless activities are not pursuing Holiness.

## **2. Saints Who Pursue Holiness Must Keep Sober in Spirit.**

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

**Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*...**

Now the phrase “*in spirit*” here was added by the translators for clarification and was *not* in the original Greek. That is why it is in

italics. So, the words or phrases in your Bible in italics were the first *commentary* of the Bible. And *many* times, probably *most* times, adding that word or phrase helps. But sometimes it doesn't. Adding it here is okay as long as you don't lose sight that Peter is *not* limiting soberness to your spirit.

Now the idea here is an image of not being drunk when it comes to godly, holy, and spiritual matters. It implies alertness, and evaluating things correctly, because you see clearly, and your mind isn't numb with intoxicating influences. And that is important because that would hinder or even stop you from pursuing Holiness.

So, basically, Peter is telling these pilgrims and strangers not to get too entrenched with this life, as in their only concern being that this life becomes easier and better and safer for them. But that they remember what this is really all about displaying the Glory of God's Grace, and proving that Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe. So, the words of the Apostle Paul are helpful here as well when he said:

### **2 Timothy 2:3-7**

**3 Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.**

**4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.**

**5 Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.**

**6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.**

**7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.**

Here the Apostle gives the image of a soldier and an athlete and a farmer. And he is saying that if you're going to be a soldier who wins the battle, or an athlete who wins the prize, or a farmer who has a good crop that he can enjoy, you can't get too entangled with this fallen world. You have to maintain a healthy separation.

### **3. Saints Who Pursue Holiness Must Fix Your Hope Completely on the Grace to be Brought to You at the Revelation of Jesus Christ**

### **1Peter 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.**

Now comes the main verb of this Passage. And for the first time in this letter, it's an imperative. It's a command: "Hope fully." Or: "Fix your hope completely." So, the first Command in this letter is an action you do with your mind and your heart. It's a Command to hope. And Hope is not an "action of the body". It is an "experience of the soul". Peter is commanding us to *experience* Hope.

And this is the main verb, the main clause, in this entire verse. The first two were subordinate participles: "Having girded the loins of your mind", that's the first one, and "being sober", that's the second one. Then comes the main predicate, "Hope fully!" Which simply means that preparing the mind for action and being sober are means to the end of the main thing, which is, hoping fully.

So, at last, Peter tells us what the object of the hope is what we are hoping in, namely, the Grace of God.

**Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

So, when Jesus comes back, He is bringing a Grace to the people of God that is not here now. So, this Grace is on the way. And Peter says, "*Hope in it. Hope in it fully! Hope fully in God's Grace*".

### **Psalms 147:10-11**

**10 He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man.**

**11 The Lord favors those who fear Him, Those who wait for His lovingkindness.**

Here, the psalmist says that God's Command and God's Delight is *not* first what we can *perform* for Him in the power of our own strength or through exercising will-power. God's Command and Delight is first that His people hope in what He alone can perform *for you and in you and through you*, with *His* Strength. So, the first human counterpart to

Divine Grace, is Hope. And Peter tells these suffering saints, "*Grace is coming to you, hope in it!*"

And Peter is not alone. The Apostle Paul wrote this in **Romans 11:6:**

**But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.**

And then he said:

**Romans 8:16-25**

**16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,**

**17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.**

**18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

**19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.**

**20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope**

**21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.**

**22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.**

**23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.**

**24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees?**

**25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.**

So, the only proper human response to God's Grace is first, Hope. But it is simply not true to think that Grace does not issue any Commands, or that it has no conditions. We need to understand that what makes Grace to be Grace is that its first command is, "*Hope! Hope fully! Let your whole soul be engaged in Hope! Don't be partially hoping*

*and partially doubting. Hope fully! Give way entirely to the experience of Hope! Be fully carried away with Hope!"*

So, it is vital that we allow God's Grace to get all the Glory! But how do we do that? By letting Grace receive all our Hope. If you hold back Hope from Grace, all you're doing is holding back Glory from Grace. And if you say that your suffering prevents you from hoping, you're saying that God's Grace isn't strong enough.

So, Peter is encouraging the believers of his day, and ours, that rather than us periodically dipping our feet into the water of Hope, we need to believe God and dive headfirst into it, without any hesitation, and literally *immerse* ourselves in Hope. Another way of understanding this is that our level of Hope should mirror God's level of Grace. If God has only *partially* given His Grace, then we should only *partially* hope. But if we believe the Bible and if we believe the songs we sing, God's Grace is deeper than the ocean, it is higher than a mountain, and it is wider than the Universe. And that should be the level of our Hope. Our degree of hoping in God's Grace, *especially in our suffering*, shows the world that Grace is all-satisfying, and that it will meet every need.

Now this order of Grace being first, and Hope being second as our response to that Grace, is confirmed by the word "**Therefore**" at the beginning of verse 13.

- ✓ Therefore . . . fix your hope completely
- ✓ Therefore . . . hope fully

This word makes Peter's first Command dependent on all the Grace that he has spent 12 verses exulting in. And that means that Biblical Christianity is *not* first an "ethic". It is *not* first a "faith", or a "feeling", or even a "theology". Christianity is first, the sovereign, initiative-taking Action of the one, true, and living God.

And the proof of that is that only now, in verse 13, do we hear a Command. So, AFTER Peter celebrates (for 12 verses) the sovereign Action of God in Election and in the Resurrection of Jesus and in the Causing of our new birth, and in the Keeping of our Inheritance, and in the Preservation of the Faith of the saints, and in the Providential Working in affliction to refine us, and in the foreordaining, predicting Work of the Prophets, only now do we hear a Command. And the first command is: HOPE IN GRACE!



So, Biblical Christianity is, first, God *graciously, freely* acting *decisively* to save His people, and, second, Christianity is Man hoping fully in that Grace, by the enabling of God. *That's* the very Essence of Christianity.

But Peter does not leave the Command for us to hope just dangling without any help. He tells us two ways to stir up our hope. The first is for us to prepare our minds for action and the other is to be sober. And these are *subordinate* participles telling us *how* to get on with our hoping. They are *not* the main Command. They are *secondary* commands that support the primary one. They get their imperative status from the main Command: Hope fully in Grace.

So, we should see the secondary Command to prepare our minds for action as a "means" to us hoping fully in God's Grace. But what "action" do our minds run for? But what is it running in? What is it active in? What is the mind to be doing so actively that it produces hope?

The answer is TRUTH. Hope happens when our minds are prepared with Truth, and active in Truth. And I say this for two reasons. One comes from the next verse:

**Do not be conformed to your former lusts which were yours in ignorance.**

The reason we were once cruelly driven by all kinds of lusts instead of being gently led by Hope in Grace is because our minds were "in ignorance." So, if we want Hope to flourish in our hearts, we must prepare our minds with Truth instead of ignorance.

The other reason I think Peter means for the mind to be active and running in Truth is that this is *exactly* what Paul says when he uses this very same metaphor in **Ephesians 6:14a**:

**Stand firm therefore, *HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH*...**

... and I think it would be completely faithful to Paul's meaning there if we said:

"Stand therefore in Hope, by having girded your loins with Truth."

So, preparing the mind in Truth and letting it be active in Truth is the "means" of sustaining full Hope in God's Grace. So, Peter's first secondary Command, "Prepare your minds for action" means to engage the mind with Truth in the service of Hope. Run with the truth of Scripture. Work with the Truth of Scripture. Live with the Truth of Scripture. **Romans 15:4** says:

**For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

The other secondary Command is "**Keep sober in spirit.**" Literally, it simply says, "being sober, hope fully." So, Sobriety, *mental* and *spiritual* sobriety, is a "means" to us hoping in God's Grace. But what does that mean in real life?

It means, if you really want to obey the Command to hope fully in God's Grace, don't let your mind drink in things that numb the mind (and heart) to the infinite Value of God's Grace.

You see, the great problem with drunkenness is that it distorts reality by making the mind insensitive to what is true and real and valuable. And most of the time we discuss drunkenness in terms of alcohol, or maybe even drugs, and that is a huge part of it. But we are living in a day when men are being drunk with sex. And that is why pornography and sexual sins are at an all-time high, even among those who lay claim to be saved.

But here's the spin off. If you make hoping fully in the Grace of God the issue, and if you allow nothing to come into your mind for long that *desensitizes* you to the Glory of spiritual things or that *diminishes* your passion for God, if *that's* your battlefield, then you may never have to fight the immediate temptation of adultery or fornication.

Now, of course, sex is not the only "drug" that intoxicates and numbs the mind to spiritual reality. The same can be true of money and career and power and romance novels and soap operas and TV advertisements and fishing and coin collecting and computers and rehabbing and gardening. The point is this: each, individual believer needs to know what numbs your mind to God and avoid it. Stay sober for the sake of full and passionate Hope in God's Grace.

So, the great concern of God through Peter in this Passage is that we not be polite and moderate “hoppers”. That none of us become satisfied with half-hoping hearts. But rather that we engage our minds with the hope-producing Truth of Scripture, and that we guard our minds from the hope-diminishing drunkenness of the world.

So, let’s be that people. And let's do it together as a Church Family. Let us prepare our minds for action, let us become and remain sober, and let us hope fully in the Grace of God being brought to you at the Revelation of Jesus Christ!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.