

STUDIES IN FIRST PETER
(The Follower's Fundamental Focus – 1:13)

Introduction:

- I. *Illustration - A preacher said to the congregation "All who want to go to heaven raise your hands." Everyone in the audience did so, except one elderly man sitting near the front of the auditorium. The preacher pointed his finger at him and said, "Sir, do you mean to tell us that you don't want to go to heaven?" "Sure I want to go", the man said. "But the way you put the question, I figured you were getting up a busload for tonight!"*

What if you had the opportunity to go to heaven right now? Would you want to go? Many of us would be like the elderly gentleman in the illustration. We want to go to heaven but not if the bus is leaving right now. Why is this? It is because we have allowed ourselves to get too attached to this world and we haven't attached ourselves enough to our heavenly hope.

- II. But in First Peter 1:13, Peter tells us that our fundamental focus should be our hope of Jesus coming back when we shall receive the grace that God has prepared for us.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

A literal translation of this verse would be closer to this:

Wherefore having girded up the loins of your mind and being sober, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revealing of Jesus Christ.

In this translation of the original text, the breakdown of the verse is clearer. What we have are two subordinate participles (*having girded & being sober*) followed by the main predicate *hope*. So again, hope is the main theme of ver. 13. Peter is saying based upon the great salvation that the prophets diligently searched for and the angels desired to look into, we should always keep the hope of that salvation alive and ever before us.

This hope was also the main theme of the previous section of First Peter where Peter emphasized the superiority, security, significance and salvation of our hope. But now he is telling us that this hope should be the emphasis, that is, the fundamental focus, of our lives. And in telling us that, he tells us how to make this so. So, let's take a closer look at 1 Peter 1:13.

Lesson:

I. The Follower's Fundamental Focus.

In the text before us, Peter gives us something to look for, that is, something that we can fixate upon when the fight for right gets rough; something we can gaze upon when the going gets tough. What is it? It's the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is the time when Jesus comes back to get His own. This, ladies and gentlemen, must be the common focus of all of us. Notice I didn't say it should be our focus; I said it must be our focus. Why? Because the verb hope here is in the imperative mood which means it is in the form of a command. Peter is telling us by inspiration that we must hope for the time when Jesus will be revealed.

Let me ask you, are you looking forward to the second coming of Christ? How many times have you thought about it today? How many times did you find yourself thinking about it last week? Let me ask you, do you ever think about it? You see the answer to this question speaks volumes about where our focus is, either on things spiritual or things carnal. A day should not go by without all of us thinking about Jesus coming back.

Titus 2:13

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ

The word *looking for* here means to await or watch with anticipate. Is this what you do in regard to the coming of Christ? Listen to me: there is a connection between your desire for Jesus to come back and the way you live your life. If you aren't faithful to the Lord, you don't really want Him to come back do you? If your service to God is erratic and irregular; if your faithfulness is temporary and transient; if the work you do for the Lord is miniscule and microscopic, you probably don't spend a lot of time anticipating His return. But if you love the Lord and look forward to being with Him and that is demonstrated by your life, the second coming of Christ will stay on your mind (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Even the faithful of the Old Testament, men and women who didn't have the amount of information as we have, looked for a heavenly home (Heb. 11:8-10, 13, illus., 14-16). mansion

The story is told about some Christians who were traveling in the Middle East. They heard about a wise, devout, beloved, old believer, so they went out of their

way to visit him. When they finally found him, they discovered that he was living in a simple hut. All he had inside was a rough cot, a chair, a table, and a battered stove for heating and cooking. The visitors were shocked to see how few possessions the man had, and one of the blurted out, 'Well, where is your furniture?' The aged saint replied by gently asking, 'Where is yours?' The visitor, sputtering a little, responded, 'Why, at home, of course. I don't carry it with me, I'm traveling.' 'So am I,' the godly Christian replied. 'So am I.' *Our Daily Bread, July 26, 1993*

So then, the duty of all of us who are Christians, the duty for each and every follower of Jesus, is to have a strong desire for Jesus to come back. We know He's coming because he has promised us that He is (Jn. 14:1-3). The question is, is His coming the fundamental focus of our life?

Now then, how can we keep our minds properly focused on the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is where the two subordinate participles come in.

II. **The Christian's Continual Concentration.**

Peter teaches us in verse 13 to have continual concentration. He does this by the first participle of the verse. Listen to him:

Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind...

The ESV translation is sort of interesting here. It says, "*Therefore preparing your mind for action...*" I like that, don't you? Being a Christian is active, not passive. There is much work to be done and as followers of Christ we need to be right in the middle of it. But in order to be as effective as we can be, our minds need to be prepared for the work. And in metaphoric language Peter tells us how to prepare our minds. We must gird up the loins of our mind.

In Bible times people wore long, flowing robes. As a result, whenever they wanted to engage in any kind of strenuous activity, they had to gather their garment together and bind it around their loins. This explains why the Jews, when they were about to leave Egyptian bondage, were told by God to eat the Passover meal with *staff in hand, shoes on feet*, and with their *loins girded*. Having their loins girded would make traveling much easier. So, the words, "*gird up the loins of your mind*," mean to pull or gather together your thoughts and focus them on spiritual things, especially on Jesus and His return. This doesn't mean that this is the only thing that we are ever going to think about, but it does mean that Jesus and His return, as well as the overall teachings of the New Testament, is what predominates our thinking. As the old saying goes, "*The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing.*" And let me tell you ladies and gentlemen, Peter is not the only one who gives us this message. The

Bible is full of admonitions to put God and His Word in the forefront of our minds (Matt. 6:19-23; Phil. 3:13-14). Now, the reality is there are many things in life that can cause us to lose our focus. What are some things that can cause our thoughts to be loose and wandering? Let me give you three:

- **Fear** – There are many fears that captivate man but there are two in particular that can prevent us from having a girded mind. First of all fear that is somehow related to material things. Someone has said that the average American spends up to 80% of his time making money, spending money or worrying about money. Obviously, if we were not careful, material things can take over our thought life and cause us to lose focus. This is why Paul admonished us to look in the right direction (Col. 3:1-2). A second thing that we fear is a loss of popularity with our peers. Sometimes trying to please man can cause our thoughts to be loose and wandering and our minds therefore to be out of focus (Jn. 12:41-42; Gal. 1:10).
- **Family** – Now understand having family is a God-given blessing and family can actually help us in our pursuit of serving God and putting Him first. But family can potentially be a hindrance as well. It all has to do with priorities. If God isn't first in your life, family can become a distraction, especially when they are not members of the Lord's church. Sometimes members stay home from services when family comes to visit. Sometimes members abstain from taking a stand for truth when family members are in error. Sometimes members of the church get angry with the leadership of a local church when family members are disciplined. I've seen all these things happen. It is a result of losing focus on the main thing (Matt. 10:34-37).
- **Flirting with sin** – The power of sin to cause us to lose our focus is something that we all need to take seriously. Sin personified wants to dethrone God in your heart and it has the ability to do it if you don't stay focused. This is why the Bible message is to stay away from sin and don't fraternize with it at all (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The message I'm trying to get across is this: let's do all that we can to get rid of anything and everything that is not conducive to having a single mind that is continually concentrating on the hope of our Lord's return. But how, pray tell, can we keep our minds girded in this sinful world in which we live? This is where the second participle of Peter's admonition comes in.

III. **The Saint's Sensible Soberness.**

Peter simply tells us to be sober. The word for sober here literally means to abstain from intoxicants, but it is used most often figuratively and refers to being calm, collected and under control. This cry for spiritual sobriety is repeated often on the pages of inspiration.

Rom. 12:3 – *“...think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”*

1 Thess. 5:8 – *“But let us, who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love...”*

1 Pet. 4:7 – *“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”*

1 Pet. 5:8 – *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

Why are we admonished so often to be sober? Because, as I have often said, the mind is the first place the devil attacks in regard to the individual. And his first aim in regard to Christians is to get our minds off of Christ and spiritual things. The devil wants to distract and divert us from the main thing. He wants our minds to be sidetrack from thinking about the second coming of Christ and instead to be centered on things that are carnal. The only way we can stop Satan is to remain calm and collected and under control no matter what life throws at us.

What does it mean to be sober? To be sober is to be alert, balanced and under control. To be sober is to follow sound reason and judgment and not to be controlled by our emotions.

Now usually we view sobriety as the antithesis of drunkenness. Have you ever seen someone drunk? They have no control. They stumble around as if they were in the dark. Their judgment and decision making is faulty at best and so most of the time they do stupid things, not because they are stupid people but because they have allowed themselves to become stupefied. They have lost touch with reality.

Drunk Driver

The defense attorney for a drunk driver was asking all the right questions. The arresting officer had testified that the defendant, when asked to produce his car registration, had fumbled around endlessly in the glove compartment.

'But it was dark, was it not?' asked the lawyer.

'Yes,' said the policeman.

'Was the glove compartment cluttered?'

'Yes.'

'How long did he fumble around there?'

'Maybe five minutes,' responded the officer.

'Well,' continued the attorney, 'do you find it unusual that a man would take his time looking in a dark and cluttered glove compartment for a small piece of paper?'

'Yes,' replied the officer. 'He was sitting in my patrol car at the time.'

This drunken man thought he was in his own car because he lost touch with reality. There are many things that can cause us to lose touch with reality and to be in a state of stupefaction, even though we've not touch any alcohol.

Infatuation with the opposite sex can cause us to act drunk. Think of Samson. Everyone knows the story of Samson and Delilah. Now you'd think that Samson would have been able to see right through her. Every day she asked him the secret of his great strength because she was working for the Philistines. You'd think that Samson would have been so suspicious that he would have nothing to do with her. But Samson did not evaluate things correctly. He was intoxicated by Delilah. And finally he told her the secret of his strength and that led to his demise. Samson was not sober-minded and so he didn't see the reality of that situation.

Now let me give you an example of how a sober-minded man acts in the same situation. Do you remember how Joseph responded when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him? He refused her and declared that he would not sin against God (Gen. 39:1-9). You see, that was the reality of the matter. He would not only have been sinning against Potiphar, but against God too. He could see it because he was sober-minded. Joseph was willing to evaluate things according to the will of God and make good decision. We need to be like that. Paul told Timothy that he needed to be like that.

2 Tim 4:5

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. KJV

2 Tim 4:5

As for you, always be sober-minded...ESV

2 Tim 4:5

But you, keep your head in all situations...NIV

As Christians we should always be in control of ourselves (1 Cor. 9:24-27). This includes being able to react properly to the various circumstances of life, never letting go of our hope or losing sight of the fact that Jesus is one day coming back. The sober minded Christian is able

always to look heavenward and await the day when Jesus shall be revealed.

Conclusion:

So, what's your fundamental focus in life? Through the inspired pen of Peter God has given us a command to set our hope fully upon the grace that will be given to us when Jesus comes back.