Shall we open our Bibles this morning to 1 Peter 1:13?

We continue in our series of studies through Peter’s letters which he wrote before sometime in the summer of 64 A.D. when Nero burned down Rome, used the church as a scapegoat, and really the first national, and even international, persecution against God’s people began. Sometimes Peter’s letters are called wilderness epistles because the believers were running for their lives in the wilderness, if you will. Both Peter and Paul would be killed over the next couple of years by this insane man, as well as tens of thousands of Christians. In fact, over the next 200+ years, there would be ten big waves of persecution that would leave more than six million believers dead. And only Constantine, in 313 A.D., decided that he would change the policy of Rome – not to persecute Christians but to welcome them; that made it the state religion which, rather than purifying the church, caused lots of compromise and the muddling of the truth to be introduced. For now Peter, in writing this letter, wants to prepare the saints for what lies ahead. And it wasn’t good, and it wasn’t easy. But yet this is the place God had placed them. So, he writes about staying strong in the midst of trials and persecutions – where we should keep our eyes and what we should be doing in the process. Our study this morning is down from verse 13 over to verse 17 and focuses on how can we walk purely in a polluted world. How can we, as children of the light, continue to stand while we are facing such grave darkness? And what happens when the world turns its heart and its actions and its anger against you – for your faith?

I heard someone once say a good teacher will tell people what he’s going to tell them, tell them what he’s going to tell them and then remind them of what he’s told them. So, here goes.

We’re going to give you three things to think about this morning. Verse 13 - you have to guard your mind. Make sure that you are careful for what you are thinking. Verses 14 and 15 - you have to guard your actions, doing what you know to do. And verses 16 and 17 - you have to watch over your will to choose what God would have for you each time.
So, in light of the circumstances and the position, we should think clearly, and we should think hopefully because the Lord, with His grace, is coming. We should act accordingly; not just say “no” to our past but say “yes” to our present and future and choose wisely to follow the Scriptures because judgment is coming.

So, on the heels of last week, Peter talking about how wonderful this salvation is - that the prophets spoke about it and the preachers preached it and the angels wonder about it, this morning we come to these four verses which talk about our walking in hope and walking in holiness, oftentimes found together. I think it was Spurgeon who wrote, “God’s architectural design for His living temple, the church, is to be holy.”

So let’s read the verses that we’re going to look at this morning. Verse 13, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.”

The word holy, "hagios," is a word translated lots of different things in the Bible; sometimes “saint,” sometimes “dedicated,” sometimes “separated.” It is always a word that speaks about something that God takes for Himself or that has been just kind of marked. I don’t know if you’ve ever gone to a picnic or maybe to a family gathering. Everybody gets a cup, and they put their name on it, and you just don’t drink out of somebody else’s stuff. Kind of like that with the Lord. Once God puts His name on you, you’re kind of His, and you belong to Him. It’s that same kind of “set apart.” Flip over the Bible there, just a couple of pages, to 1 Peter 4:1. Here’s what Peter says about that old life and then the new life of holiness. And it’s got that word “therefore,” and we’re not reading what’s ahead of it, but here’s the application. “Since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking
evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

So Peter saw as a huge challenge for this young church, as you might suspect, that on the one hand we have to live holy, different lives in a world which is anything but holy. We’re saved. We don’t belong to the world anymore. We belong to God. He places us at odds with the standards and the practices and the goals that we see around us. And yet, we’re also supposed to reach this generation. So Peter will write to them about that, and when all is said and done, Peter’s point will be that the price of putting the Lord first will be worth the reward that you find.

All right. So here’re the three things that Peter wants them to think about, beginning in verse 13. **Number one** - your mind, or guarding what you think, or thinking clearly and hopefully. Notice, “gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Peter spends much of this book, by the way, talking to present-tense Christians about their future, and he really is interested (and I guess we should be as well) that how we view our future will have a lot to say in how we live in the present. Right? Our outlook has a lot to do with our living. Much of Christian living for that matter – whether you’re being persecuted or not – is governed by a future hope. “I’m not getting involved with that because the Lord is coming. I’m not following down that path because the Lord is coming. I hope He comes today!” There’s always that focus upon the future so that we can overcome in the present. It’s kind of like when you get married. We have a lot of weddings coming up in the Summer – always, every Summer, lots of them. I’m amazed at watching engaged couples be so consumed with a wedding that takes 45 minutes, but it takes months and more to plan. And especially the poor girls because the guys don’t seem to care; but the girls come in with books to check off lists that are this thick, and they’re just frazzled. But they’re planning ahead. That day is soon coming. Well, it’s kind of like that for us. We’re believers, and Jesus is coming, and His grace is going to come with Him, and we need to be sure that we look forward to that.

Notice the word “therefore” in verse 13. It’s an adverb that speaks of everything that we’ve already looked at. Knowing all that we’ve learned about God’s goodness and the purpose of trials and the inheritance that’s waiting for us and the promise
that He’ll get us there and the marvel of our salvation, just focus your mind on resting in the fact that the Lord is coming.

Notice the words “gird up the loins of your mind.” Now I’ll grant you that that’s not an everyday word to us, I don’t think; it’s kind of a foreign word. But to Peter, and to those in Peter’s generation, that was a common word. And the word “gird” means to cinch up or to belt up. At least in the culture men, normally, because of the heat and the place that they lived, they wore long, flowing robes that kept you cool but also protected you from the sun. And they were fine while you were walking around, but the minute you had to get up and move or do something, all that flowing robe got in between your legs and got in the way, and you weren’t very mobile, or you had very little ability to move around, and so you would put a sash on, a belt, and you would just pull the bottom up through the belt, and then it would give you mobility. You’d tuck it in, and you’d have this freedom of movement. I can’t begin to tell you how often I’ve seen brides come up the altar steps and not do so good in those beautiful dresses. They do fine at the rehearsal, but they’re not wearing the dress. They climb right up the steps. But then, when they get to wedding day, there’s, “Whoa!” Seen a couple of face plants............

Well, being girded means to be ready to move. When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt on that first Passover, it says that they ate the feast of which Jesus would be that Lamb without spot; they ate it in haste (Exodus 12:11), they had themselves girded, they were ready to move, they were ready to move out. They were about to leave their old life - Egypt - forever. They were headed out to become a pilgrim people. They were going to get new laws. They were going to get a new future, a new life, a new hope. They were heading for a Land of Promise. Everything was new, but they had to be ready to go.

Well, it’s kind of like us. We’re saved from our old life. We’re going to heaven. Our sins are forgiven. But now we have a job to do, and if we become slack in our outlooks of God’s goodness, then we’re not going to do very well standing against the wiles of the devil and the woes of the world. And Peter says to this very pressured generation, “gird up the loins of your mind,” or always be ready to have an answer; be thoughtful in your approach. Have an outlook that allows you to stand. Being girded allows the workers progress without hindrance. Jesus did that. He girded Himself and then washed the disciples’ feet. Maybe we’d call it “rolling up your sleeves” today. That might have the same kind of impact. Are you ready to get busy and especially to apply your mind to understand the times in
which you live, to recall and remember His love, to look forward to His calling? It is, more than anything else, for Christians a battle of the mind, isn’t it? Because after a while, you pretty well know the basics. But are you living them out? If our thoughts center upon Jesus and His soon return, then we can live with a hopefulness that many who don’t look for Him don’t have. And if I live with my eyes upon the soon coming of the Lord, a lot of the worldly hindrances that otherwise might slow me down, won’t. Paul said in Hebrews 12:1-2, “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

If you want to do well in a world that is increasingly hostile towards you, even though you have to reach them and love them and pray for them and be an example, one necessary step in walking purely in a polluted world, is to have your mind filled with the truth and have ready access to it. Think about it a lot. Reinforce the truth in your heart. Paul said, in writing about the battle that we have with the enemy, there in Ephesians 6:14, “have your waist girded with truth, stand fast.” Have your minds made up. Outlook for you and me, as Christians, determines our outcome, and the attitude that we have towards what the Lord has said inevitably determines what we’ll do with it. There’s that Proverb 23:7 that says, “For as a man thinks in his heart, so he is.” If I’m actively ready and waiting for Jesus to return, it’ll be a great motivation for me not to compromise or disobey. It really will. “Hey, the Lord could come back today.” I remember, and I forget who it was - I was a young Christian man, and he said in a sermon to us young guys, “So did you go anywhere this week that you didn’t want the Lord to go with you?” And I went, “Ohhh, maybe one place or two. I don’t know.” Far greater is my strength if I wait for Him to come and my eyes are constantly in the present tense upon it than someone who’s taken their eyes off of that hope and their eyes off of His grace that He’s going to bring; and now finds himself facing the world with little hope in a world that is turned against him. It’s kind of like Abraham and Lot. You remember their example, certainly. Abraham kept his eye on the Lord, didn’t he? And when the division between him and Lot had to happen, he said, “Just pick whatever you want,” and Lot looked around and went, “That’s what I want. I want watered gardens, and I want to head towards Sodom and Gomorrah. I want to head towards city life.” And Abraham looked to the desert and said, “I’ll just take the desert. But I’m going with the Lord.” And his focus was upon Him. In the end,
Abraham gets everything God has promised, and Lot loses everything. He's overwhelmed by the world.

So, one of the battles that you want to face, as a believer, especially to try to live a holy life in this world, is that you want to be sure that your mindset is established, and it isn't influenced by whatever happens day-to-day in the world around you. There are a lot of things that are changing opinions and challenging your hope and questioning your faith. The Bible hasn't changed at all. The culture you live in has changed a lot. God's promise hasn't at all.

And so Peter says to these guys, "Make sure that you have a mind that is girded" or literally is ready to move. I can't begin to tell you, and maybe you know, how many Christians fall victim to this ever-changing worldly opinion of things. And the debates continue about worldly concepts and useless information and worldly friends and worldviews, and the discussions go on and on, and then pretty soon they're overthrown because they're not established in God's Word. They really forgot His promise. They're not looking for Him to come back. They just get caught up in the world. And that was a danger for Peter's folks. I mean, their pressure was significantly different than ours, but it's still the same problem, you know? So, like Paul from prison writes to the Philippians (4:8), and he says, "Keep your eyes on the Lord. Whatever is holy and pure and upright, think on those things." Don't lose track of the fact that He is coming for you. It'll be a great mindset that'll allow you to get through some of the difficulties because I love to be able to say sometimes, "I'm glad the Lord's coming back! I'm glad this isn't the end of the line. Wait till He comes and fixes everything. This is going to be great. Wait till Dad gets home!"

And then, "be sober." Literally, don't be drunk. That's literally what the words read. But it suggests that while you're looking at the world in your mind that you have control of your full faculties, you're sound-minded, you're level-headed, you're pragmatic, you're morally decisive. People under the influence feel free to do many things carelessly that they would never do sober. Maybe you can relate to that. So, you see life and all of its challenges and problems and even persecution, and we've got to look at the bigger picture. We've got to look at the bigger picture. God has put the church in the world to be a light in a dark place, to be salt of the earth. No matter where it goes, this is what we're going to do. We're going to be that salt. So right thinking is sober thinking. Look, you know about the future, as a Christian, far more than the politician or the psychologist or the philosopher.
You have God’s Word. You could write the book! We’ve been clearly taught of His return. We should live accordingly. So, stay the course.

In 1 Peter 4:7, he says, “be watchful.” It’s the same word for sober here. Be ready, man, because the Lord’s coming at an hour that we think not, and we don’t want Him to come like a thief in the night. Right? We’re ready, we’re waiting. Think clearly. Don’t be so easily knocked off course.

And, notice in verse 13, “And rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you.” Think hopefully. I find that Christians today are much less optimistic than they used to be. I don’t know why that is. You say, “Hey, isn’t the Lord good?” “Oh, have you seen what’s going on?” and they’ll read to you the latest forty news items. “Yep, seen it. The Lord’s still coming.” “Oh, I don’t know. The world’s going to hell in a hand basket.” “Yep. The Lord’s still coming.” And we still need to be those witnesses for Him. We don’t have to be depressed. We don’t have to be discouraged. We certainly don’t need to be fatalistic. God’s grace found me in Jesus, and He’s coming to get me, and He’s coming to get you. Hope is a Christian word, isn’t it? It’s far beyond wishful thinking, “Oh, I hope so.” No. He’s coming. That’s your hope. It’s a sure thing. And the church to which Peter was writing had a foreboding, near-term future, but they possessed a glorious long-term future. So, man, get your eyes upon Him.

I read a story a couple of months ago of a fellow that was on a cruise ship in the Atlantic when they were hit with very severe weather, and he said everyone was terrified. And so they called a meeting in the dining room so that the purser could speak to the folks, and he said, “I’ve seen the captain’s face. He’s not the least bit worried.” And he said it made all the difference in the world. “I’ve seen the captain’s face.”

Well, Peter had seen the Captain’s face. He’d even walked on the water for a little while when he kept his eye on His face. But the minute he turned away, he didn’t do quite so well. So he says to them, “Rest your hope fully, completely. Lay everything you have upon the grace that Jesus is bringing. Keep your eye on the Captain’s face.” That’s where you find your rest.

So your mind is the first place. You’ve got to start with what you’re thinking. You’ve got to protect what goes into your thoughts and what you entertain in terms
of truth. You've got to think clearly, and you've got to think hopefully, and you
guard your mind, and fill it with the things of God.

Second of all, verse 14, you've then got to do what you know pleases the Father.
It's not enough to just think the truth. You've got to act upon it as well. So he
writes, "as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in
your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your
conduct." So Peter moves from what we think to what we do, and he mentions two
aspects of conduct. One of them is negative, one of them is positive - what we
should not do and what we should do. The negative is in verse 14, "don't conform
yourself to the former lusts as you used to do when you were ignorant." Now, it's a
pretty offensive word sometimes, but it aptly describes you and me before we
were saved. We ran around in life, ignorant. Right? We were blinded by our sin.
We were driven by our lusts. We were in darkness of rebellion. We were under
the shadow of judgment. We had absolutely no clue. In the futility of our minds,
we walked around. That's what Paul wrote to the Ephesians (4:17). We once lived
in the world as children of disobedience, and it showed, didn't it? In the choices
we made and the things we did and the fact that our life was not very satisfying.
And it's probably the reason you eventually came and got saved. You were crying
out, "God, there's got to be more than this!"

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he said in 1 Timothy 1:13, "I obtained mercy from God
because I sinned in ignorance." When he stood before the Athenian non-believers,
there in Acts 17, he said the exact same thing. He said (verse 30), "Times of
ignorance God overlooked, but now calls us to repent because now Jesus is dead,
and He is risen." In other words, we didn't know any better before, but we do now,
don't we? That's his argument. That was then; this is now. God has moved into my
life. I'm a new creature. I've got a new nature. I have a new heart. I'm waiting
for His return. Simply put, my life today is not the life I once had.

And that's what Peter says in verse 14. "As obedient children, don't live like you
did when you were ignorant." You now say "no." By the way, "no" is a spiritual word.
Say "no" to worldly invitations. Say "no" to the friends you used to have. Say "no"
to the movies you used to go see. Say "no" to the internet sites you used to visit.
Say "no" to the bars you used to frequent. Say "no" to the books you used to read.
That was the old you. You're not that person anymore. "No, no, no." Biblical. It's
hardly enough because we also have to say "yes, yes, yes" to the things of God. So
get your mind straight, in order, sober, hopeful.
And then begin to act upon what you know. In fact, if the negative is in verse 14, verse 15 says, "be holy in all your conduct." He's called you. He's holy. "Be," verse 14, "obedient children" to your Father. You are to become more like your Father. Kids inherit their parents' nature, and when you were born again, you inherited your Father's nature. 2 Peter 1 talks about that as well. Holiness is a family resemblance. Your Father is holy, and you want to look more like the Father that you serve in heaven, you'll be holy. A man becomes like his God, Psalm 115:8 says.

So if Jesus is your Lord, then you're going to become more like Him. Slow process to be sure. We're battling the flesh and the enemy and the world and all kinds of things that need to be changed. But we're headed in the right direction, and as obedient children, with the Holy Spirit living within, we have the ability to say "yes." So, think clearly, think hopefully, and then respond to God's unbelievable grace by beginning to do, as His kids, what you know that He wants. It's not enough to think well. You've got to begin to act upon it; to put off the old man, to put on the new man, to begin to do the things that God asks for. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). So, we're to live to represent our Lord, to walk in His footsteps, if you will, in the world. We are His children. We are holy.

And then I want you to notice these words, "in all your conduct." It's a big encompassing word, isn't it? Be holy in everything you do. Be holy with your ministry, be holy with your work habits, be holy in your leisure time, be holy with your friends, "in all your conduct." "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). That's how you survive in a polluted world. You just live for Jesus, and you're not affected by the things around you. You aren't moved by them. They aren't part of the description for your life that God has brought to you.

So you have your mind, and then you have your actions, and then finally there's this issue of your will. And that's where a lot of the battle is reduced to. Notice, verse 16, "It is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.' And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear." Choose His will each day, knowing that God, who is a God of grace, is also a God of justice. It's the glory of God in verse 13; it's the holiness of God in verse 14; it is the Word of God and the will of God here. It is written. The Father is a judge. Live and act accordingly. If you're going to live a pure life in a polluted world, you're going to have to follow His Word and depend upon His help.
Now Peter quotes out of Leviticus 19, which says that holiness is what God is. We don’t just become like our God who is holy, but we are transformed into a life that much represents His. And the only way that happens is if I will allow His Word to make decisions so that my will is bent to His. Notice in verse 16 these words, “It is written.” That should carry a lot of weight with you. “It is written.” It’s not my opinion, it’s not the latest survey poll, it isn’t a Democratic or a Republican platform. “It is written.” God has said. God has said. It should always be the question we want answered in our lives. What does God have to say?

I remember, when I was a young man, going to listen to Billy Graham several times. And he would repeat, in the message, constantly, “The Bible says, the Bible says.” It was his favorite phrase, I’m pretty sure, and he would say it over and over and over again. And I heard him speak, years later, to pastors, and he said, “I did that very purposefully because,” he said, “what I say doesn’t matter, but what God says matters. It is written.”

So Peter says you have to have a will here, you know? Your mind should be thinking the thoughts of God and be encouraged with the hope of His coming and His grace. Your actions should be determinative, decisive – that I’m going to do what I know to do. But there’s also that battle of the will. I know what to do, but I’m not doing it. Well I should do it. A holy fear of God, in reverence, knowing He is a God of judgment. And then the next four verses talk about a sense of gratitude over God’s redemption. He saved me. He’s blessed me. He’s brought me out of this aimless conduct from the tradition of my fathers. I’m delivered, man. I owe Him! And it’s that motivation that he writes towards the end of the paragraph.

Now the word “if” in verse 17, “if you call on the Father,” is the Greek word for since. He’s not questioning whether they have. But he is saying, “Since you call Him your Father, you must realize He’s holy, and He wants you to be holy, and He’s a fair God. He will judge every man’s behavior and works without partiality.” So, look, be moved to be holy. Make your will His will, and conduct yourself through the time of your stay here not in fear of man, but in fear of God because He’s the judge. Right? We ought to be fearing God and knowing that one day we’re going to stand before the Father, who’s going to assess our lives; not our salvation. If you’re saved, you’re in; but your fruitfulness. Nero was a powerful man. He killed thousands of people. He was as wicked as anyone could be. But he kind of came and went. Jesus said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew
At least fear the right Person in your will. “Oh, what are people going to think of me if I speak out for the Lord?” Well, it doesn’t really matter. The thing is - what is God going to think of you? Because He’s the judge.

So, three areas you need to think about.

Your mind, and that means knowing the truth. That means surrounding yourself with things that are true, that are clear, that are hopeful, that you can hang on to in the present tense. Even when things around you seem to be spinning out of control, God’s Word doesn’t change. You can hang onto it. You can guard your life with it. You can have great hope because of it. The Lord is coming. He’s coming for you, and He’s coming for me.

But then we should act accordingly. If you know something, do it. Hearers don’t go very well. Doers are far stronger.

And then, battle with the will. Choose every day - I’m going to do the Lord’s will over my own. He may come back today. He may come back today. Wouldn’t that be awesome? There’s a little trumpet at about 11:30, and you’re going to have lunch. You’re not going to have lunch - you’re going to have a big dinner in heaven. That’d be better, wouldn’t it? Who knows?

But that’s the way we can stand purely in a polluted world. Our mind, our actions and our will.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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