

Good morning. We are continuing in our study of Peter this morning. Peter has reminded his readers that even though they are sojourning in this world, that is that as Christians there is always a sense that we do not belong in this place, and even though that difference will cause varying degrees of hardship, we are tethered to, strengthened, led, and prepared by Jesus Christ who saved our souls. Peter then transitions to a moment of exhortation in his letter. The exhortation really is quite simple. It follows the idea that if God did these things for us, we have a responsibility to reflect certain things in the Christian life. Those things are all tied to what the scripture calls holiness. Peter culminates his exhortation with that directive to be holy because God is holy, and He commands it. Holiness is to the Christian life what an aptitude test is to education. Holiness is to the Christian life what the weigh scale is to those watching their weight. Holiness is to the Christian life what a game with professionals is to the amateur athlete. Holiness is the at once the proof that God has saved us, it is the constant test by which we can assess our growth, and it is the goal of the Christian.

The work of God to make us holy and to show us where we need to grow draws out at least three questions that must be asked by every reader. We will focus on the first question in the message this morning. The first is question is, what are you thinking? It can be exclaimed as more of what I will call a statement question. What are you thinking!? Did your parents ever mention that to you? It can also be a request to really understand the heart and desire of a person like, “so, what are you thinking?”

.I. What are you thinking? Notice how this comes out of Peter’s teaching. **Verse 13** gives us **three responsibilities** as Christians. The **first** responsibility is seen in the very first phrase, **“therefore, preparing your minds for action.”** Remember that every good student of any writing will give the author the benefit of clarifying his, or her, statements, so we must pay attention to the “therefore” words in scripture. It points back to the **first 12 verses** which highlights the power of God in all three persons of the Godhead, and leads us to rest in God’s eternal and merciful plan that has been prepared from before the foundation of the world, and has been announced to us by God’s Holy prophets. We could summarize what the therefore intendeds by saying, *because of all that God has done in history and in your life, prepare you minds for action.*

The phrase that is translated “prepare your minds for action” is actually a word picture in Greek that only resonates in cultures that still wear robes. It **literally** reads to **“gird up the loins” of the mind**. The idea for that context was to apply a common practice when people with robes wanted to do some work that required more flexibility. It is hard to run freely with a robe on, so people would bring up the excess and tie it up with a belt. I’m kind of partial to a good pair of shorts, aren’t you? Once commentator likens this expression to our use of “roll your sleeves up” when we are getting ready to perform any task that is before us. (Karen Jobes: 1 Peter, BECNT) I think adding the phrase, “get your head in the game,” to, “roll up your sleeves,” actually gives us the full sense of Peter’s teaching. It would read something like, just look at all that God has done in Christ! Now roll up your sleeves and get your head in the game!

Now we have to consider why this kind of exhortation would be given, and I think it is because Peter is underscoring how distracted we can get from the main thing, which as we have said, is the pursuit of holiness. **Holiness, of course, is to be living set apart from sinful life patterns, and seeking to reflect the freedom from the power of sin that Christ has accomplished in us.** We do that by resisting sin and temptation, and living a life pattern of repentance and resting upon grace. The greatest motivator for that is to anticipate the blessing of being made holy, and giving ourselves to a holy pattern of life. Therefore, Peter reminds us to set our hope **fully on the grace that will be revealed**. Are you living in a way that distinguishes that you are living for something else? We show that we are distracted from that commitment to holiness when we passively allow what is temporal to compete with what is eternal, and we let the temporal win. The temporal doesn’t have to be sinful in and of itself, but it could become the place of our affections and hope instead of God and His direction in our lives. That is when the temporal becomes a pothole that will catch the tires of my life and wreaks havoc. Friend, there is no lack of opportunity to run ourselves into the potholes of this life simply because we’ve been disengaged. Don’t you hate that feeling when you are cruising along to wherever you need to go, and seemingly out of nowhere a Grand Canyon pothole appears just

before you drive over it? I get so frustrated with myself when I do that, but mostly because I'm thinking about how much money it will cost to fix. That is what sin does, and if we are not daily concerned about our holiness before God and simply cruising through the day, we will run our tires into those potholes. In **chapter 5** Peter uses the analogy of a lion prowling around seeking to devour us. I submit a means of aid in this battle to stay alert, prayer. Here is the prayer request God will be prompt to answer, **"Lord, show me where I am living in an unholy manner, and show me how to live in holiness."**

Peter then adds the **second responsibility**, it is not only to think preparedly, but **to think so as to display sober-mindedness, or self-control**. I've had the occasion to bump into several drunks throughout my life. One thing is true about drunks, until they cross that threshold of being a functioning alcoholic, a drunk loses all sense of reason and self-control. Not too long ago I was walking along with a group in a small town. It was in the evening and several of us had the craving for an ice cream, so we walked over to the store. On the way back we noticed a very diminutive man walking towards us, and it was very clear by his countenance that he was very drunk, I would say he was drunk enough to be plastered, or slammed, if you will allow me that colloquialism. As far as his stature, the top of his head probably came to my sternum, and I am willing to bet that I had close to a 100 lbs on the man. As we walked by and avoided him, he became terribly angry that we noticed that he was drunk. He swore with such ferociousness that I am certain that if we had stopped he would have started a fight with everyone, not just me. He had lost all sense of reason. I wouldn't have had to fight him, just sit on him, and the whole encounter would have been over. He was clouded in his judgment because he was drunk. That is what Peter is trying to get us to understand, that sin, which keeps us from holiness and is what Christ came to remove, fogs our minds. **We do not think with clarity when we are inebriated with sinful pleasures**. Dear friends, please hear me. **Sin makes us devalue reality and what is invaluable, and make priceless what is worth nothing**. It's just sex, our carnality wants to believe. No, it is the means through which God has determined that a husband and wife display their covenant of sacrificial love and commitment to one another, and it is the means through which other image bearers of God come into existence. My marriage isn't worth the heartache anymore. I'm worthless and unlovable. My life is no longer worth living. Oh dear friends, those are just a handful of lies that devalue what is invaluable, and makes priceless what is worthless. Christians, by the power of God, are to assess the content of the mind, and triage what must stay to help us in our calling, and what must go.

What does head in the game, sleeved rolled up for work, and sober-minded or self-controlled thinking look like in my calling as a Christian father, or mother, or daughter, or son? What does it look like as a Christian employee or employer? What does it look like as a Christian who is a citizen of society? Peter moves that way when he presents the next responsibility. We are to set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Prepare your mind for action, think soberly, and the **final responsibility**, **"set hope fully on the grace that will be revealed at the revelation of Jesus Christ."** Every person has hope of something better. The Christian looks forward to experience a better day than now. It is in a sense what we all experience in through this time of isolation and social distancing. We can't wait until this thing finishes and we can start getting back into normal life. The Christian lives with the anticipation of a consummated redemption. What does that mean? Well, redemption means that we are saved. The concept of being saved comes from the the gospel. Just to be clear, the gospel says that Jesus died, and was buried, and rose again the third day, as the scriptures declared it to be. It says that Jesus revealed Himself to hundreds of people before His ascension, and He promised to return to gather His people. That final step that Jesus Christ accomplishes, that returning to gather His people, is the anticipation of a consummated redemption. We can't wait until Christ ushers in the end of this world, so we can live in the glory of the heavenly world. It is seen throughout scripture.

Acts 1:10-11 (ESV) "And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 (ESV) ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The Christian who is ready to reflect Christ in every calling, a Christian who is sober-minded, and self-controlled in his, or her, thinking, is one who filters every responsibility, hardship, and desire through the filter of Christ's return. We live for that day. If we live for that day, then we hold the things of this world in a way that we do not allow them to blind us from that ultimate joy, that ultimate hope of Christ's return. The Christian displays this life pattern by setting ***all*** our expectation on that day.

What exactly does Jesus bring on that day? Well, that coming of Jesus inaugurates a completion of the work of redemption that Christ will bring upon all that is. There will be a new heaven and new earth, and everything will be judged by God. Those who are in Christ will be raised up to the resurrection of life and hear the Judge's declaration, "***well done though good and faithful servant, enter into your rest.***" Further, all that we have labored for on this earth will be tested by God. What was done for His glory will stand. The rest will be removed. For those who are not in Christ, those who have not repented of their sins and trusted Jesus Christ, Christ promises they will be judged by God on the scale of God's holiness, His righteousness. But His righteousness is too high to attain on one's own ability and merit. So if you have not put your faith in Jesus Christ I implore you to rest in Him. The scriptures say that those who have rejected Christ will be resurrected to the resurrection of judgement, and simply because they have rejected the only means of experiencing the holiness that God requires, which is given through Jesus Christ alone.

Acts 17:30-31 (ESV) ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ ***because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness*** by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

John 5:26-29 (ESV) ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to ***execute judgment***, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, ***those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.***

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Dear Christian brother and sister, what are you preparing for? There are very important and necessary callings that demand our focus here on earth, but the way we function in those callings is with an understanding that Jesus will return. Is your hope fully on that return? Are you bearing the kind of risk that honors the Christian hope? Are you bearing the kind of sorrow that cripples you because your hope was not found in that coming day, and now you have found yourself with loss? Dear friends, the means of grace that Christ has provided, the hope in Christ that will be accomplished, is the only thing that will sustain our souls truly when the hardships come. There will be a better day, and that day will not be marked with an asterisk warning us of other impending problems. Everything on this earth has to be qualified, except for the promise of life for those who trust in Jesus Christ. Oh, dear Christian, set your hope on that day. Filter every thought, every aspiration, every action through the lens of that glorious day. If your thoughts and aspirations point to a robbing of joy in that day, then reject it. If it intensifies your hope for that day, then embrace it.

May we truly reflect a life that is prepared for action, sober-minded and self-controlled in thinking, and fully focused upon the glorious return of Christ. Amen.