

A New People for an Old Message: A Study in 1 Peter, 1:13-16, Preached at Harambee by Pastor Michael Gunn on April 5th, 2009

“There is a twofold problem in the heart: what we think or trust and what we desire and worship. Sin happens when we don’t trust God above everything (When we interpret in the wrong way) and when we don’t desire God above everything (When we worship the wrong thing). Sin happens when we believe lies about God instead of God’s word and when we worship idols instead of worshipping God.”

Tim Chester

Intro

We have spent the last few weeks looking at the greatness of the Gospel and the greatness and faithfulness of God in working the gospel into our hearts. Salvation is truly a work of God’s mercy in our lives. It is in the gospel that we can rejoice in spite of our trials (which are inevitable in this life) knowing that Jesus took on the ultimate suffering (the wrath for our sins) so that we can have great hope in this life and into eternity.

As the gospel becomes central in our lives, we begin to gain our identity (in Christ) and our life map (based on the works of Christ on our behalf). We are called out to be with God, and to be a people for His own possession so that we join with Him in suffering for those who are oppressed by sin.

This morning we are going to take a look at two of four commands that Peter gives as a result of Christ on the cross working in our lives. He roots these commands in the gospel and in our identity in Christ, and he begins by contrasting that with a futile mind of unbelief, encouraging us to *“Prepare your minds for action”* as the starting point for change. The four commands are **first**, *“Set your hope on the grace;”* **second**, *“Be holy in all your conduct;”* **third**, *“Conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile;”* and **fourth**, *“Love one another earnestly through a pure heart.”* Peter also gives us five reasons why he exhorts us in these directions, which are the fact that we are children of God (**v. 14**), because God is holy (**v. 15**), because God does not show partiality (**v. 17**), because of the great price of redemption (**v. 18**), and because they had been born again of an immortal seed (**v. 23**).

As mentioned above, we are going to take a look at the first two commands and reasons today.

From the Head...

Verse thirteen begins with the word “Therefore,” which is summing up much of what Peter wrote in the previous twelve verses dealing primarily with the mystery of salvation. He begins this passage with two participles exhorting the people to “prepare” their minds (thinking) for action, and to be “sober minded.” They are not in the imperative, but they assume something about the believing mind.

First, we can actually prepare our minds. The word “prepare” is the word/metaphor to “gird up.” The idea of the metaphor is one that the Palestinian mind would understand well. To gird up meant a process that involved taking their long flowing robes and tucking them up under their belts/loins in order to work or travel. The robes would cause an impediment to dexterity, and girding up would free them to do the work without restraint. Our text literally says “Gird up the *Loins* of your mind,” expressing the custom to gird up their robes around their loins/belt. We are part of the action to make this happen. The participle is in the middle voice, which means that the subject can participate in the action.

Secondly, while this is not a command, it is a prerequisite to making the rest happen. Simply put, unless we are working on our issues from a thought process, we will not see change in our lives.

The word for “mind” (*dianoias*) is a word that means to “see through” and includes the faculty of understanding. It is used in **Matthew 22:37**, which exhorts us to love God with that same mind. What do we believe about ourselves, God, salvation, etc.? This affects how we make choices, and how we deal with circumstances in our life. If we really struggle to believe that our heavenly Father is different than our earthly one, and that He is perfectly good, just and sovereign, we will struggle when life’s earthquakes hit. It is too easy to entertain Satanic thinking, while assuming we are thinking God’s thoughts (**Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:23**). It can motivate us to act in a way that we perceive to be righteous, while in reality we are acting on behalf of Satan. When God judges us, He literally gives us over to our vain imaginations and evil thought life (**Romans 1:28**). As believers we are called to “set our **minds** on the things of the Spirit,” and not on the flesh (**Romans 8:27**). We are ultimately *“transformed by the renewing of our minds”* (**Romans 12:2**). In the book of Proverbs we are consistently told to guard our “hearts,” which is the “well spring of life” (see **Proverbs 4:18-23; 27:19**). For the ancients, the “heart” was the seat of both thinking and desires. They are interrelated. Our desires are truly connected to our thought life, which in turn is demonstrated in our actions and behavior. **“Behind every sin and negative emotion is a lie”**¹ that we choose to believe. Sin is a result of the fact that we don’t trust or worship God. As Tim Chester writes, *“There is a twofold problem in the heart: what we think or trust and what we desire and worship. Sin happens when we don’t trust*

¹ Tim Chester, [You Can Change](#), p.81

*God above everything (When we interpret in the wrong way) and when we don't desire God above everything (When we worship the wrong thing). Sin happens when we believe lies about God instead of God's word and when we worship idols instead of worshipping God.*²

Another thing that we need to see in this verse is the fact that when we "Prepare/Gird" our minds, it is for "Action" (Purpose). Today we will see two aspects of this action:

"Set Your Hope Fully On the Grace" (1 Peter 1:13-14)

This grace is a particular grace. This grace is ultimately delivered "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." "Revelation" here is most likely referring to Christ's second coming (see too **1 Peter 1:7; 4:13**). But the phrase "brought to you" is in the present passive, which indicates that this process is also happening to us. "Setting our hope" is something that we continually do in order to fully prepare our minds, and we do so, according to Peter, because of our identity as a "child of God." Peter roots this command in our identity as an "obedient" child, which changes the motivations and desires of our heart (**v. 14**). The word "passions" here is the word for "desire" (*epithumia*). Desire can be either good or evil in scripture. We are to desire to be with God (**Philippians 1:23**), but desires can also be evil and destructive (**Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:5**). It is from our desires that most of our actions are constructed. Desire is the motivation that drives our thinking and actions. If our hope lies in something other than God and His grace, then we will become "conformed" to our evil desires. Note that verse 14 reminds us that there is a connection between "desires" and "ignorance." The former desires (evil desires are implied here) are a result of "ignorance" of the truth of the gospel.

"Be Holy In All Your Conduct" (1 Peter 1:15-16)

Secondly, we are commanded to be Holy (*hagios*), or set apart. Peter refers us to **Leviticus 11:44** as the reason for this command: "You shall be holy because I am holy!" God saves us, and sets us apart for His purposes. How is God's holiness transforming all of your conduct? In what areas have we not desired to be set apart? Lies we choose to believe, and actions we believe will bring us joy, worth or happiness, are the root of our sin and unhealthiness. We can conduct ourselves as "Holy" (set apart) because God is Holy, and He has saved us to set us apart for His reasons and purposes in His kingdom. We are made new and have been given a new identity (Child of God) in order to re-wire our motivational structures to truly praise God from our hearts and minds!

...to the Heart

If our problem is that we don't trust or worship God, then we need to examine our desires and worship God instead of idols (**Repentance**) and trust God instead of believing lies (**Faith/Belief**). "Repent and believe" is the foundation of the gospel, and it is the foundation for ongoing growth in the gospel. We walk by faith in God; allow God to define what is wrong with us and what path to choose; we trust Him for His guidance, and repent of the desire to control our life. Are you struggling to believe that God is good? That He is sovereign? That He loves you and is in control of your life? If so, these are the seedbed for discontent, and the foundation for fear and anxiety. A changed life comes from a changed belief structure and a belief that God and His gospel are sufficient for all life and godliness (see **2 Peter 1:3-9**).

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² IBID, 76