

Scripture Reading: 1st Peter 1:13-25 (NASB - New American Standard Bible)

¹³Therefore, gird 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. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" [Leviticus 11:44-45, 18:2-4].

¹⁷And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. ²⁰For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

²²Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. ²⁴For,

"All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers, And the flower falls off,

²⁵But the word of the Lord endures forever" [Isaiah 40:6-8].

And this is the word which was preached to you.

Good morning, everyone. It is good to see you all again. Last week, I began a sermon series on the First Epistle of Peter. We learned in verse 2 of that epistle that all three members of the Trinity are involved in our salvation. It is God the Father who has chosen us, in a parallel way that He had chosen the people of Israel to be His special people. We learned also that it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us, who sets us apart from the corruptions of this world and leads us to live God-honoring lives. And we learned that it is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross that brings us forgiveness of sins so that we may obey Him and be disciples of Him. It is these foundational thoughts that underpin everything else that Peter teaches in his epistle.

We also learned last week that it is these foundational thoughts that lead us to have a "living hope" as we live our lives, oftentimes facing various kinds of trials. This living hope is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the promise that we will join Him in our heavenly home in the future. Last week, I pointed out the testimonies of the Old Testament saints outlined in Hebrews chapter 11 whose lives bear witness that the life of faith is worth living no matter what kind of trials we may face in life. Those people in Hebrews 11 went through differing kinds of trials with differing kinds of outcomes for their life, some of them suffering an early death because of their testimony and some of them experiencing a wonderful deliverance from difficulty, but each one of them displaying a triumphant story of faithfulness through all kinds of circumstances. The stories of Hebrews chapter 11 give us Christians hope as we face our own difficulties in living faithfully for God during our current time.

Today's passage in the second half of 1st Peter 1 begins with verse 13 – "¹³Therefore, gird 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." We begin with the word "Therefore." *Therefore*, given everything outlined in the first 12 verses of this epistle, which I just reviewed for you a moment ago, we are now being instructed in verse 13 as to what we are to do next.

Verse 13 instructs us to do three things:

- Gird our minds for action.
- Keep sober in spirit.
- Fix our hope (focus our hope) completely on the grace of God that will be brought to us when Jesus is revealed to us at His return.

The first thing we are exhorted to do is to “Gird our minds for action.” Other English translations of the Bible say we are to “Prepare our minds for action.” Standing now on the solid foundation of our salvation initiated and accomplished by God, with assurance that we will spend eternity with Him and His Son Jesus, we are to set our minds on action for our Christian life and testimony here on earth. Get ready for a big challenge. My Bible uses the phrase “Gird our minds for action.” The idea here is that we must ready ourselves for the big challenge that awaits us. That word “gird” harkens back to the clothing of ancient times when men wore a long robe with a belt or a girdle tied around the waist. At times when fast action was needed, such as before a race or a battle or some important physical labor, the men would take the ends of their robes and tuck them into that belt or girdle so that their legs would be free to run fast and engage in the big challenge that they must face. We as Christians have a big challenge that awaits us as we live faithfully for Jesus and as we face challenges from our three big enemies. Do you remember the three big enemies we have that I mentioned at least twice during my sermon series in the epistle of James? Our three big enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil. We must avoid the world’s corrupt practices and philosophies, filling our minds with God’s Word (the Bible) and letting it transform our thinking and our behavior. And we must avoid the temptations of the flesh – our bodies crave many things and we must avoid the sinful actions that we are tempted to engage in. And the devil is a foe that we must resist. Both James chapter 4, verse 7, and 1st Peter chapter 5, verses 8 and 9, tell us to resist the devil – if you do so, firm in your faith, he will flee from you. But we have to be diligent always. Be diligent in facing any distractions from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

That’s why we must “Gird our minds for action.” Our minds must be focused on our task. We have a task to do: to play our part in building the Kingdom of God. 1st Corinthians 12 tells us that God has given each one of us a spiritual gift to exercise for the building up of the church, which is called the “body of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, “⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good,” and then the rest of that chapter encourages us to play our part as members of the body of Christ, whether we have a big, visible job to do or a less visible but equally important job to do.

And Ephesians 4, verse 7 and verses 11-12 have this to say – “⁷But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ... ¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” These very visible ministers in the church, such as pastors and teachers, are given to the church in order to equip all of the Christians in the congregation to do the work of ministry. All Christians are ministers – all of you, not just the teachers. All Christians are to be involved in building up the church, the body of Christ. We have differing gifts and differing areas of responsibility, but everyone is needed to help build up the church.

Well, let us return to 1 Peter 1:13. “Gird your minds for action.” Set your mind on fulfilling the task that God would have you do. The next exhortation is this: “Keep sober in spirit.” Keep sober. In America, that phrase usually means: don’t get drunk on alcohol. But the word means more than that. It means to be clear-headed. To be sober-minded. To think rightly and biblically, not following the world’s reasonings.

The third exhortation here is the main aim of the verse: “Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” We saw in last week’s message that our hope is based on the assurance we have that we will be with Christ in our future home. Here in verse 13, we are looking at that again: we fix our hope completely on “the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” when Jesus returns. Last week when I commented on verse 5, I said that our salvation will be fully accomplished at the end of time when Jesus returns and restores all

things. We will have new bodies and we will experience complete freedom from all corruption of sin. This is the grace that will be brought to us. Let us fix our hope on that promise from God. With this as our firm foundation, we can live our lives with confidence.

Let's move on to verses 14-16 – ¹⁴“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’.”

As we gird our minds for action, be sober-minded, and fix our hope on God's grace, the first exhortation Peter gives his audience is to be obedient children and refuse to follow the former lusts which we once followed. Such an exhortation to abandon former lusts can be found in many of the New Testament epistles. Obviously, it must have been a big issue in Christian churches at the time when Peter and Paul and John were writing their epistles – that's because fleshly lusts can still retain a strong hold on people even after they have placed their faith in Jesus. And I think it continues to be an issue in many of our contemporary churches. The cravings of the flesh are quite powerful and people do find it hard to break out of old habits. There are even Christians who somehow rationalize to themselves that they can continue to indulge in these habits. When we think about lust, we often think of sexual lusts, but there can be other types of lust as well – for example, lust for food (we call that gluttony and Jesus calls that a serious sin) or lust for power or lust for possessions, etc.

Let me share two passages of Scripture that have caught my attention on this topic. The Apostle Paul has these words to say to the church in Ephesus, in Ephesians 5, verse 3 and verses 5-7 – ³“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ... ⁵For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them.” No immorality ... no impurity ... no greed. None of these things ought to be a part of the lifestyle of people who call themselves followers of Jesus Christ. Such things characterize the lives of the “sons of disobedience,” and should not be found among Christians. Note verse 7: do not join those sons of disobedience ... do not join their sinful activities.

Another passage is 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 – ³“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.” Verse 4 – treat your own body with respect and that means not indulging in sexual immorality. Related to this is 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 – ¹⁸“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in you, so don't indulge in such sin. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins to purchase our redemption, so actually those of us who call ourselves Christians should realize that our bodies belong to Him, not to ourselves. Glorify God with your body.

Let's return to 1 Peter 1:14-16. When Peter here exhorts his audience not to follow their former lusts, it is phrases like this one, and other verses in this epistle with similar wording, that leads Bible commentators to note that Peter's audience is likely to be primarily Gentile Christians rather Jewish Christians. Converts from Judaism likely would have been living basically moral lives even before they heard the gospel – it is Gentiles who were indulging in a lot of immoral practices and who need to be exhorted to forsake their former lusts.

In verses 15-16, we are exhorted to be holy as God Himself is holy. As I mentioned before, to be holy is to be separate ... separate from the world and its corruptions. Let me quote from New Testament scholar Thomas Schreiner:

The command to be holy indicates that the pilgrim people of God (1:1; 2:11) are to live differently. They are to separate themselves from the evil desires of the world and live in a way that pleases God. Some scholars rightly point to Leviticus 18:2–4, where Israel is to distinguish itself from the evil practices of Egypt and Canaan. To be holy is to separate oneself from what is evil. The injunction to holiness embraces all of life (“in all you do”). No sphere of life is outside God’s dominion. ... God’s people are to live holy and pleasing lives because God is holy and good. Verse 16 reiterates the notion that God’s people are to model their lives after God himself.¹

Let us now move on to the next section of today’s passage. 1 Peter 1:17 – “¹⁷And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves **in fear** [**conduct yourselves in fear!**] during the time of your stay upon earth.” It is a serious thing to call God your Father and to claim Christ as Lord, but then to live the kind of corrupt, lustful life that was mentioned in the previous paragraph. Conduct your life properly, in accordance with your claim to be a child of God and a follower of Jesus Christ. Verse 17 here tells us that God will impartially judge each of us according to our work. Are you ready to face that judgment when it comes? This exhortation to conduct ourselves in fear because we will face judgment in the end was something that often gripped me in my younger days when temptations were strong. Another verse that mentions this is Matthew 10:28 – “²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Let’s continue reading. 1 Peter 1:17-19 – “¹⁷And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” Peter regards silver and gold as perishable items and therefore as less valuable than the precious life-blood of living beings. In the Old Testament, the sacrificial lamb had to be unblemished and spotless, representing being free from sin and corruption. It was the blood of the perfect and spotless Son of God that was shed on the cross of Calvary that pays the penalty for the sins of all those who will place their faith in Christ. As I read before in 1 Corinthians 6:20 – “²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” If you call yourself a Christian, conduct your life properly while here on earth, honoring your Father in heaven and His Son, our Lord.

The paragraph continues in 1 Peter 1:20-21 – “²⁰For He [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. ” This is an interesting verse. Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world. Before God had created this earth, He knew how the history of mankind would unfold and He planned ahead of time the sacrifice of Christ that would need to happen. Christ “was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times ” for our sake, to make a way of salvation so that we can become believers in God. Christ died as a sacrifice for our sin, and then He was raised from the dead to prove His victory over sin and death. And then, says the second half of Hebrews 1:3 “When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Christ is now glorified and seated at the right hand of God the Father. Peter says that our faith and our hope are in this God who has accomplished this marvelous work on our behalf.

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 80.

Thus far in his epistle, Peter has told each of us how we are to live our lives on this earth, with hope and faith and holy living. In the next paragraph, he turns his attention to our corporate life in the church. 1 Peter 1:22-23 – “²²Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.”

I notice that at the end of verse 21, Peter speaks of faith and hope. In verse 22, he speaks now of love. That reminds me of the last verse of the famous “love chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. That chapter speaks of three precious items. 1 Corinthians 13:13 – “¹³But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Faith and hope are precious – Peter has been teaching us how important these are to the foundation of living our lives as Christians. Now we turn to the greatest of the three precious treasures mentioned in 1 Corinthians – love.

I am reminded of another significant passage. Jesus has this to say to His disciples just before His crucifixion, in John 13:34-35 – “³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

This is the crucial quality by which the world outside these doors will know that we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ: if Christians have love for one another. The three members of the Trinity have love for one another, even before the world began. God created mankind to have a relationship with Him, so that they would love Him and love each other. God so loved the world that He sent His Son here to restore our relationship with our Creator. John 3:16 – “¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

I have shared with you before one of my favorite verses, 1 Timothy 1:5 – “⁵But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” Oftentimes after teaching a Bible study or preaching a sermon, I recall this verse and its important lesson: our goal in teaching is not to increase people's Bible knowledge or to perfect their doctrinal understanding. The goal is a transformation of their heart and behavior. The goal is that they would have LOVE ... love for one another that comes *from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith.*

This brings to mind a project I did last year for one of my seminary courses. You might recall that last year, I distributed a questionnaire to you folks in the congregation asking you for your perspectives about the strengths and weaknesses of Osaka International Church. Many people responded by saying that one of the strengths of our church is that it is a welcoming place. However, a lot of people also indicated that being a welcoming place was one of the things that need improvement at OIC. This appeared to be a contradiction. My professor told me that the survey results show that whether people perceive OIC as doing well at being a welcoming place or is doing poorly at that, we can see that being a welcoming place is highly valued by our church members. I pray that we will continue welcoming newcomers and showing love toward all who fellowship at OIC.

Let's look again at 1 Peter 1:22 – “²²Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart...” Several times in this chapter, Peter has told us of the importance of obedience ... obedience to God's truth, which means we have left our old, sinful life behind us and we are now obeying Jesus Christ and His teachings. It is through this that *our souls are purified* and we can love our brothers and sisters *with a sincere love*. Let us now put that into action and *fervently love one another from the heart.*

Peter continues in verse 23 – “... ²³for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.” *We have been born again*, not of physical seed but by *the living and abiding word of God*. The living word of God. The abiding word of God. Many people have testified that this book, the Bible, the Word of God, has transformed their lives, and history shows us that the gospel message has transformed countless individual people and whole societies as well.

Peter goes on to quote from the Prophet Isaiah in verses 24 and 25 –

“²⁴For, ‘All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers, And the flower falls off,

²⁵But the word of the Lord endures forever.’ [Isaiah 40:6-8].

And this is the word which was preached to you.”

This enduring word of God, preached by the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament, is the message that brings eternal life to us. I pray that you all will embrace this message and be born again. If you have not yet given your life to Jesus and accepted His offer of salvation, then after the service today I recommend that you talk to the pastor or to me or to one of our council members or to the person who will be at the back of the auditorium standing next to the “Lift/Prayer” sign, and we can show you the way to salvation in Jesus Christ.

The title of my message today comes from verse 13 of 1st Peter chapter 1: “Gird Your Minds for Action.” Standing on the firm foundation of our salvation initiated and accomplished by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and being energized by our “living hope” in God's promises, we now gird our minds for action to live out our Christian responsibilities. Let me review the lessons of today's message:

- We must ready ourselves for the big challenge of living the Christian life.
- Be active in living out your part in helping to build up the body of Christ, the church.
- Be sober-minded: think rightly and biblically.
- Set your hope completely on God's grace and the promise of eternal life.
- Be obedient children and refuse to follow the former lusts which you once followed.
- Be holy: the pilgrim people of God live differently than the rest of the world.
- Christ purchased us with His blood – we belong to Him.
- Fervently love one another from the heart.
- The Word of God endures forever. Let us stand on that firm foundation.