

1 Peter 1:13-16 – Part EE

As we begin [1 Peter 1:13-16](#), it is important to appreciate what Peter is actually trying to do. These verses actually serve as a major transition into the rest of the entire epistle. In order to even come close to living a life that is pleasing to God, the believer must be convinced about certain great truths related to their salvation. If we as believers are always doubting the realities of our salvation, then we have no reason to think that we can live a spiritually successful life. We cannot always be doubting and questioning God and His Word. To the contrary, believers must be convinced of the truthfulness, the complete trustworthiness, and the utter dependability of the Scriptures. Once all of that becomes a meaningful reality in a believer’s life, it is then that they can begin to become mentally and emotionally prepared to strive for a life of holiness before God.¹

Peter identifies four attributes that he deems essential for a believer to live a holy life – changing how we think, exercising self-control, focusing our hope on Christ, and refusing to be conformed to the sin that once infatuated us. This sentence is the first word of exhortation that Peter has given, and it is a very strong exhortation. The sentence concludes in v15 and v16 with the double injunction to “**be holy**”. No matter what our understanding of those words and their implications for our personal lives, they are probably as serious of an exhortation as someone can be given anywhere in the New Testament. We know from the word “**therefore**” in v13 that Peter is beginning a new section, but it is a section that is built upon the truths that he provided to his readers in [1 Peter 1:1-12](#). So, what is his new message? What is his conclusion to the doctrine of v1-12? Well, Peter’s message is about living, about how a believer lives, about what he calls in v15 as their “**conduct**”. It is the Greek word “*anastrophe*” and simply refers to a person’s behavior.² I personally like the way that the ISV translates the verse when it says,

1Pe 1:15 (ISV) Instead, just as the one who called you is holy, be holy in every aspect of your life.

So, what v15 and 16 are clearly stating is that the believer’s conduct is to be modeled, developed, and patterned after God Himself. Put in a very simplistic way, each believer could simply ask the question under any circumstance in which they find themselves - “*Is this what God would do?*” How would God respond to this difficulty, to this trial, or to this dilemma? Now, I am sure that you are probably thinking that that may be a little over the top to think that we can always behave as God would want us to behave – and I would concur. However, no matter what we know and realize may be the reasonable limitations of our personal behavior, we still need to have a godly standard to govern what we do. That is what the phrase “**Be holy, for I am holy**” in both v15 and v16 does for us. It establishes the standard, the goal, the target. Once again, the verb “**be holy**” in v15 is the aorist imperative – that very strong and unusual Greek verb construction that completely governs all of the surrounding verbs that complement it. In v16, the verb “**be holy**” is not an aorist imperative, but a present imperative emphasizing the need to maintain the integrity of our life continually. What Peter will tell us later in [1 Peter 3:16](#) is that when we truly do live up to God’s standards that the world will “**defame you as evildoers**”.

1Pe 3:16 (NKJV) having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

The word for “**defame**” simply means that people will slander you and speak evil against you because of your godly conduct.³ Obviously, we can see that very explicitly in our current culture where

Christians are being condemned, criticized, and accused of hate crimes for upholding God’s very high moral standards.

Now, in v13 the governing verb is the word “**rest**” because it is an aorist imperative. In your translation it may be the word “**hope**”, “**fix**”, or “**set**”. Each of those translations seem to be a better translation than the word “**rest**” in the NKJV. The actual Greek word is “*elpizo*” and is translated as “**hope**” in the Greek Interlinear. It is the idea that the believer is to completely fix or set their hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring to them when He will be fully revealed to them. It is the obvious idea that a believer cannot be placing all of their hopes on what this world has for them. Believers cannot be investing their life in what they can receive from the world. They must be placing their hope not on this world and what it can offer to them, but rather on what awaits them when they actually see Christ for the first time. The believer has to learn how to live for the world that they cannot see rather than the world that they can see. Obviously, and we all know this much too well, but this is not an easy lesson to learn. It is the idea that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. We always seem much more inclined to hold on to what we have and to chase what we want. Certainly, this is not an encouragement to be irresponsible with what we have and what we have been given – not at all, but simply an encouragement to live for that which ultimately has much greater eternal value. At a personal level, it is a battle that we all have to fight, and it is not an easy battle at all. The last thing that I would want to do is to give someone the impression that “**losing your life**” for the sake of Christ is an easy thing and without challenges. If it was easy, then we would all be doing it without reservation.

So, that is one of the reasons why Peter begins v13 encouraging the believer to “**gird up (aorist middle) the loins of your mind**”. Several of the other translations say “**prepare your minds for action**” (NASB, NIV, ISV, NRSV), or “**brace up your minds**” (AMP). This is the only place that this particular Greek word is used in the New Testament. However, it clearly comes from the idea that when someone was wearing a long flowing garment (which was very normal in the Mideast) and they were getting ready to do something that required some level of exertion like working, running or entering into a battle, that they were to bind up their garments by a girdle or a belt around their hips. In other words, they wanted to be unhindered and unencumbered by their robe.

If any believer consciously chooses to live for the world which they cannot see, there must be the corresponding understanding that it requires a great mental battle to do so. We always win or lose our spiritual battles in our minds, and not primarily in our hearts. I am reminded of verses like [Romans 7:23](#) which identifies the actual battlefield on which we fight and struggle,

Ro 7:23 (NKJV) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

It does not say “warring against the law of my heart”. The mind is the battlefield. [Romans 12:2](#) says,

Ro 12:2 (NKJV) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Once again, it does not say “be transformed by the renewing of your heart”. [Colossians 3:2](#) says,

Col 3:2 (NKJV) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

It does not say to “set your heart on things above”. Once again, our battle is always a mental battle. What we think and how we think will always govern what we do and how we live. So, we have to take Peter’s exhortation seriously. We have to think biblically, we have to think strong, we have to prepare ourselves mentally for the kind of life that God actually wants us to live.

Anyone who is determined to live a life that pleases God, or in the context of [1 Peter 1:13-16](#) to “**be holy**”, must develop a godly way of thinking that includes removing the old way of thinking. The Bible is truth, not theory. So, how does one acquire a strong mind, how do they gird up their mind to think biblically? Well, the answer is really very simple. Scripture reveals the mind of God. It does not reveal all of His mind, but it reveals everything that He desired to give the believer. So, if someone is going to think biblically, they have to think like Scripture.⁴ They have to know Scripture. No one who is neglectful when it comes to the Scriptures will ever be able to “**gird up the loins of their mind**” in a biblical way. No wonder Paul encouraged believers in [Colossians 3:16](#) with these words,

Col 3:16 (NKJV) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Think of what happens this way. When someone is saved, at that moment their entire mental ability which previously was “spiritually dead” is now regenerated and able to comprehend spiritual truth for the first time. [1 Corinthians 2:14](#) describes some of it this way,

1Co 2:14 (NKJV) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

It is as if the newly saved individual is in a dark room and God simply turns the light on. At that moment, it all makes sense – finally! However, there still remains a problem. After salvation there is still a residual and lingering influence from the flesh and the world that if the believers do not discipline themselves to constantly renew their mind to God’s truth in the Scriptures, then they will find themselves engaged in the same foolish and unbiblical ways of thinking that they entertained before they were saved.⁵ As believers, we now see what we never saw before, we now understand what we never understood before, and we now have the power to obey what we know is godly – which we never had before. The result of all of that is very simple. When a believer obeys what they know to be the will of God for their life, the blessings of God on their life invariably follow. God’s blessings are rarely immediate – rarely, so the believer has to be willing to be patient to allow God to reveal His blessings to them. It is one of the obvious ways that God has chosen to develop patience and endurance in the believer’s life.

The second encouragement that Peter gives is simply to “**be sober**”. Now, as we continue to go over these words, please do not lose sight of what Peter is really doing. The real thrust of what Peter is addressing is the “**conduct**” of a believer. In our previous terminology, “*Is this what God would do?*” Obviously, thinking biblically and being sober minded are essential ingredients for that to happen, but still we do not want to lose sight that all of this is just a part of what it means to “**be holy**”. The phrase “**be sober**” is the Greek word “*nepho*” and it simply means to be self-controlled, to be in control of how one thinks, not to be an irrational thinker, and to be well-composed in our mind,⁶ so it has a very direct relation to the idea of girding up our minds. Of the six times that the word is used in the New Testament,

three of them are in [1 Peter](#). In [1 Peter 5:8](#) it is the same word regarding the fact that the believer needs to be on guard against the devil.

1Pe 5:8 (NKJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

In [Peter 4:7](#), he says,

1Pe 4:7 (NKJV) But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious (*nepho*) and watchful in your prayers.

We have to appreciate that there are always conditions that are necessary to be successful - always. If a person ignores the conditions, they will reap the negative consequences. For instance, if someone is going to be successful in school, then they have to study. If someone is going to be a successful employee, then they have to be respectful and compliant to their employer. There are always conditions required to be successful, and being in control of how we think is an absolute necessity for spiritual success. Believers have to constantly remind themselves of what is true, of what is godly, and of what is eternally important. I am convinced that this is an issue of personal discipline – this idea of constantly reminding ourselves of what is right and of how God wants us to live. If a believer neglects this “thinking” discipline, they will eventually become unbiblical in their thought life and not even know it. In order to be spiritually successful, every believer must become a disciplined thinker. We mentioned it in a previous study, but thinking in a new way is not automatic, but requires great effort, concentration, and a high level of intentionality.⁷ It is so easy for any believer living in America to become mentally intoxicated with all that the world offers, and in that process lose their spiritual concentration.⁸ The more enamored we become with what the world has to offer versus what God has to offer, the less inclined we will be to living a holy and committed life before God. [1 John 2:15-17](#) makes this bold declaration,

1Jn 2:15 (NKJV) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

ENDNOTES

¹ Grudem, 77.

² Strong, *conduct*, 951.

³ Strong, *defame*, 1169.

⁴ MacArthur, 43.

⁵ MacArthur, 43.

⁶ Louw, 353.

⁷ Schreiner, 78.

⁸ Grudem, 76.

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