

Dear Friends,

In our study passage, as throughout New Testament teaching on the Christian ethic, Scripture directs--commands--us to work to develop an all-encompassing Christian worldview, not a hybrid part-Christian-part-other world view. By Peter's "...gird up the loins of your mind," we are cautioned that such a transforming lifestyle shall face resistance, hostile resistance. Our adversary is skilled and effectively deceitful. He knows our blind spots, our appetites, and our weaknesses, our "besetting sins." And he knows how to assault us in those blind spots. He deceived Eve into thinking the mirror opposite of God's words was true, so he knows how to persuade us that wholly unbiblical ideas and conduct is wholly acceptable to the Lord.

To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ;
Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Corinthians 2:10-11 KJV)

In this context of Paul's teaching the Corinthian Church to forgive and restore an erring member, likely the man whom Paul referenced in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul warns. Failure to restore leaves us wholly vulnerable to Satan's deceitful "devices." Do you want to become informed and equipped to resist those devices? Go to Scripture--to Scripture alone--for the necessary information to withstand. When you choose to look outside Scripture for identification of strategies to defend against Satan's devices, you have already fallen prey to his "advantage" over you. "Yea, hath God said" effectively was the serpent's appeal to something other than what God said.

Pastors observe the thinking and conduct of people, good and bad. We live in an age when "Yea, hath God said" has proven quite effective. Sincere professing Christians embrace politicians, political causes, or conspiratorial world views with such zeal that one wonders what their true religion is. When we prefer to talk about these issues more than about the Lord and His Word, we may reveal more than we intend about our true religion. What we want to talk about reveals what we think most about and value.

Thank the Lord, when we fall prey to the serpent's devices, our loving and merciful Lord points the way and welcomes us back into His gracious fellowship. Even in our study passage, had those "Strangers" to whom Peter wrote this letter not stumbled, there would be no purpose for Peter to write them to "**Gird up the loins of your mind.**"

I find it interesting and instructive that Peter used "**your mind**" in this lesson. "Your" is the King James translators' word for the **plural** second person pronoun. The girding up of which Peter wrote is wholly applicable to each of us as individual believers. However, an integral part of that girding up also requires that we grow a powerful sense of connection and harmony with our brothers and sisters, especially the folks in our home churches. A whole church needs to "Gird up" their minds into comfortable and transparent harmony, so that we live, breathe, and think as one, not as individuals striving to manipulate others to agree with our personal ideas. In my Bible study over the years, I have occasionally studied a passage and thought about a different--and sometimes rather strained--interpretation of the passage, a nice novel idea, or so I thought. In each instance, more study refined my understanding of the passage and nudged me to a view that harmonized with the believers closest to me. In 1 Timothy 3:15b, Paul teaches us that the church is the Lord's house, as well as the "**pillar and ground of the truth.**" If we follow Scripture, as stated in this lesson, the governing agent the Lord has appointed to know,

proclaim, and protect (Everything from the foundation to the highest rafter of the building) the whole body of truth, is the church, not your or my personal viewpoint.

Folks, we have an amazing Savior and Guide for our lives. He lays before us a wealth of truth and nurturing strategies to enable us to face, resist, and overcome our greatest fears and trials, whether He intervenes and delivers us from them or intervenes by giving us sufficient grace to endure them. Lord give us wise grace to study Scripture to learn His way and His blessings in that way.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

How Then Should We Live?

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:13-16 KJV 1900)

Scripture for identification of strategies to defend against Satan's devices, you have already fallen prey to his "advantage" over you. "Yea, hath God said" effectively was the serpent's appeal to something other than what God said.

Pastors observe the thinking and conduct of people, good and bad. We live in an age when "Yea, hath God said" has proven quite effective. Sincere professing Christians embrace politicians, political causes, or conspiratorial world views with such zeal that one wonders what their true religion is. When we prefer to talk about these issues more than about the Lord and His Word, we may reveal more than we intend about our true religion. What we want to talk about reveals what we think most about and value.

Thank the Lord, when we fall prey to the serpent's devices, our loving and merciful Lord points the way and welcomes us back into His gracious fellowship. Even in our study passage, had those "Strangers" to whom Peter wrote this letter not stumbled, there would be no purpose for Peter to write them to "**Gird up the loins of your mind.**"

I find it interesting and instructive that Peter used "**your mind**" in this lesson. "Your" is the King James translators' word for the **plural** second person pronoun. The girding up of which Peter wrote is wholly applicable to each of us as individual believers. However, an integral part of that girding up also requires that we grow a powerful sense of connection and harmony with our brothers and sisters, especially the folks in our home churches. A whole church needs to "Gird up" their minds into comfortable and transparent harmony, so that we live, breathe, and think as one, not as individuals striving to manipulate others to agree with our personal ideas. In my Bible study over the years, I have occasionally studied a passage and thought about a different--and sometimes rather strained--interpretation of the passage, a nice novel idea, or so I thought. In each instance, more study refined my understanding of the passage and nudged me to a view that harmonized with the believers closest to me. in 1 Timothy 3:15b, Paul teaches

us that the church is the Lord's house, as well as the "**pillar and ground of the truth.**" If we follow Scripture, as stated in this lesson, the governing agent the Lord has appointed to know, proclaim, and protect (Everything from the foundation to the highest rafter of the building) the whole body of truth, is the church, not your or my personal viewpoint.

Folks, we have an amazing Savior and Guide for our lives. He lays before us a wealth of truth and nurturing strategies to enable us to face, resist, and overcome our greatest fears and trials, whether He intervenes and delivers us from them or intervenes by giving us sufficient grace to endure them. Lord give us wise grace to study Scripture to learn His way and His blessings in that way.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

How Then Should We Live?

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

(1 Peter 1:13-16 KJV 1900)

Wherefore” is one of those words that appears often in Scripture, but we tend to take it for granted. When you see this word in your Bible study, take note. It links what follows in the text with what preceded it. It signals that you are moving from one movement to another in a single lesson. It emphasizes a logical “A” to “B” relationship between the thoughts prior to the thoughts following.

In the context of our study passage, Peter taught us about Jesus and His victorious salvation and His keeping of His people by His effectual and finished work. To accent the timeless importance of this truth, he revealed that the same Holy Spirit who leads us into God’s truth in Scripture also revealed the coming, sufferings, and victory of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people who lived prior to Jesus’ coming. In one flowing lesson, Peter takes us from eternity before creation to the coming and work of Jesus to our present joyful faith in Jesus and His success as our Savior—and as our keeper.

Thus, Peter’s “Wherefore” in our study passage moves us to the logical and correct response we should follow because of all that we read prior to this verse. We too often isolate specific Bible truths into our own little “Boxes,” but Scripture integrates the fabric of truth into one united and God-glorifying garment. Our present discipleship, how we live life daily in the trenches of our life, should be from the secure and loving position in which the Lord has placed us in His merciful grace. If we believe those bedrock eternal truths of our salvation and our security in Jesus, we are morally and spiritually obligated to manifest that faith in how we deal with life’s painful and disappointing moments. Since this challenge is a lifetime “Assignment,” we need to constantly study the Scriptures and pray for insight and conviction to grow stronger in our knowledge. (2 Peter 3:18 KJV) And to that objective, Peter gently guides us to the right path—the only path—that will take us to a fruitful and joyful experience of our salvation today, in the here and now of our lives. Biblical truth affirms our eternity with the Lord, but it also teaches us how to enjoy some of that loving joy today. We need not wait for all the joy and glory till we arrive “Over there.” We can discover and be blessed by the “**Earnest of our inheritance**” now till that final “**Redemption of the purchased possession**” of our eternity with the Lord event. (Ephesians 1:14 KJV) But our present experience of this blessing is possible only to the extent we follow Scripture’s teaching. Should we fail to

“Gird up” our minds and face life’s painful trials faithfully “Hoping to the end” for the Lord’s deliverance, we shall never know that present joy.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Gird up the loins of your mind. This thought suggests military preparation. Paul uses the word in this way in his rich symbolizing of the Christian life as a soldier in the army of Jesus.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. (Ephesians 6:14 KJV)

We would think of the traditional outer garment of first century Mediterranean people as a robe, a long flowing garment. When a man knew he needed to engage in strenuous physical activity such as he would face as a soldier in battle, he would “Gird up” or tie up the lower portion of that garment to not impede his movement. Although Peter doesn’t directly use military symbolism in this context, by the very word, he nudges believers to be constantly prepared for hostile confrontation from our spiritual adversary. A mature spiritual response to life’s challenging moments is not an automatic reaction. In fact, we may cultivate either a godly response or a carnal one in the face of painful disappointments. For this concern, Peter urges us in this lesson to “Gird up” our minds. Take the initiative and consciously, deliberately address your mind before reacting. It is so easy to react based on our emotions, which always create more problems for us, even though we later think about Scripture and what our spiritual response should have been. I usually reject clichés. They over-simplify things. However, this topic is nicely addressed by the cliché, “It is better to **prepare** than to **repair**.” So true. Whenever we respond to life’s painful moments based on our emotions, we do spiritual damage to ourselves and to those who receive our carnal fire, words or actions which we must later attempt to “Repair.” Thank the Lord for mercy; He commands and gives us the grace to repent. That is a major part of “Girding up the loins” of our minds. Failure to repent for a believer in Christ is like a soldier going into battle with no protective gear and with no weapon. We predict our failure before we engage in the battle.

In addition to girding up our minds—perhaps an integral part of that girding—is to face whatever troubles we have with a fixed focus on the Lord. “**Hope to the end.**” How easily we fix our minds on the dark side of issues we face. What can go wrong? When will it bring us down? If you constantly “Preach” the defeat and death of your faith to yourself, don’t be surprised when you fail. The revelation of the gospel is about “Victory in Jesus,” both now and in eternity. We only experience that hopeful end when—and if—we gird up our minds and hope, never when we preach the funeral of our faith.

...**hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** We gladly talk about God’s sufficient grace promised to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7. But do we understand that sufficient grace is not automatic. It wasn’t for Paul, and it is not for us. What did Paul write immediately following his understanding of God’s sufficient grace?

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9b-10 KJV)

Paul’s response to the Lord’s revelation of sufficient grace for the trial instead of deliverance from it was to turn his mind from his thorn to glorying in that thorn because of the power of Christ that “May” rest on him if he continued looking to Jesus and enduring his thorn “for Christ’s sake.”

Peter’s response in our study passage resonates with Paul’s teaching. Grace for life’s trials is not automatic. It comes in response to our 1) girding up our minds, and 2) hoping to the end (Hoping constantly for the Lord’s grace till it comes, even if we perceive it as being long delayed, and even if the Lord gives grace to endure rather than grace in deliverance).

...**for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** Do you see the unbroken link between grace which we need today for our trials with the “**revelation of Jesus Christ**”? This “revelation of Jesus Christ” is not the Second Coming, but rather His coming with grace to enable us to live with our trials and, despite them, keep our joyful hope anchored in Him.

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

When we walk the way of faith, the Bible path, the stronger our conviction in the saving, keeping purpose and power of God, the more we understand the ethical obligations of grace. In keeping with this ethical link, Paul writes, “**For the love of Christ constraineth us.**” (2 Corinthians 5:14a KJV) It was not fear of hell that Paul regarded as the constraining, motivating power of His Christian life. It was rather his sense of the incomprehensible love of Christ. This sense of God’s love and of His certain saving and His secure keeping of His children, also transforms our motivation. Instead of living the Christian life out of fear of hell, or with the idea of gaining “Stars in my crown,” our impetus to live the ethics of Jesus becomes our gratitude to Him for “Amazing Grace.” David further affirms this truth.

**What shall I render unto the LORD
for all his benefits toward me?
I will take the cup of salvation,
and call upon the name of the LORD.** (Psalm 116:12-13 KJV)

David’s stated reason to serve God was for “...**all his benefits toward me.**” Perhaps we need a season of occasional soul-searching. What really motivates our Christian life? What drives us to deny self and live out that Christian ethic which Peter teaches? If we invest our time, energy, and emotions in our church and in our faith for personal gain of any kind, we need a season of repentance and reform.

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. Later in this letter, Peter restates this truth.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. (1 Peter 4:15 KJV)

Peter’s point is obvious. We may suffer for one or more of these sins only if we commit them. Do we prefer not to suffer for any of these sins? Easy; make a point of not committing them. While Peter’s list is not comprehensive in the specific sins named, by the breadth of scope, Peter makes a wholistic point quite well. From murder to being a busybody, our Christian ethic, grounded on the Lord’s rich care and keeping of us in His love, urges us to live for Him by searching Scripture and striving to model our lives according to its teaching, not chasing our ego. Why? In Paul’s words, we strive to so live because of the compelling, constraining love of Christ. If I truly ponder what He did for me, how can I take Him or His teachings lightly?

How well do we measure up to this Biblical mindset? When another believer says or does something that offends you, that “Hurts your feelings,” do you immediately pray and strive to practice Jesus’ teaching (Not His optional suggestion) in Matthew 18? If you measured your Christian ethic by this one chapter’s instructions, how are you doing? Jesus spoke those words. He directed Matthew to include that teaching in His gospel record. How many other “Unpopular” admonitions do we disregard, as we often disregard this teaching? If we hope to claim His grace when the dark painful seasons close in on us, we need to practice what Jesus taught us in Scripture. Can we offer a truly Biblical excuse for lying? For

adultery? For stealing? No. Neither can we claim His grace apart from our faithful obedience to Scripture's teaching.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought ye to be** in all holy conversation and godliness. (2 Peter 3:11 KJV)

Elder Joe Holder