



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

## **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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**Volume 18 Issue 17**

**April 28, 2019**

### **The Call of a Glorious Salvation**

Florida is a region that is threatened every year with natural disaster — specifically hurricanes. That is why disaster management pamphlets and speaking with those who have lived through hurricanes like hurricane Andrew can help one to prepare for a hurricane strike. Things like this are important:

- Prior to the storm, prepare your house and your possessions for the storm by putting boards on the windows, and cataloguing your possessions, and moving your cars into

the garage.

- Plan as to whom to contact after the storm, how you will contact them, and who they should contact.
- After the devastation, you will need to have on hand enough food and water to last at least fifteen days if not more.
- Furthermore, you will need enough cash/currency to enable you to get by during this time assuming that you won't have use of a credit card, an ATM, or your bank.

The list goes on and on. And honestly, none of these action items are a burden when one is preparing for an emergency. You will willingly and zealously provide for each one of them because in a devastating hurricane you will want to be prepared!

Family of God, something greater than a hurricane is coming to this earth — a storm so great that the entire universe will be destroyed.

2 Peter 3:7, 10, “But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... [Speaking of this day, Peter continued...] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens [we are talking here about the entire universe] will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”

And yet what truly is amazing is that, for all in Christ, this day has been fully anticipated by God such that He has provided NOT ONLY for our protection and safety, BUT ALSO the certainty of a most glorious life to follow!

As we have seen from 1 Peter, when spoken about in its fulness that is what is meant by the term “salvation”! That in fact is the “salvation” that Peter is referring to.

1 Peter 1:13, “Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit...”

As you have heard many times, when you come across a “therefore” in the Bible, you have to ask: What is the “therefore” there for? Here, it draws us back to THE subject Peter has been focusing on in the opening verses of 1 Peter: Our Glorious/Weighty/Of Substance Salvation-which involves...

- The choice of God in eternity past to redeem us (v. 1).
- The resulting implanting of the New Life in time (v. 3).
- The gift of faith (vv. 5, 8).
- Forgiveness (v. 2).
- Our certain growth in grace (v. 2).
- The call of holiness (v. 2).
- The promise of our perseverance (vv. 6-8).

- Our life in the New Heavens and Earth (v. 7b).
- A plan that came to fruition in time which precedes every other religion on this earth (vv. 10-12).

In light of this Weighty/Glorious/Of Substance Salvation, what ought we to do? Peter answers this question in 1 Peter 1:13.

1 Peter 1:13a, “THEREFORE [based on this salvation], gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit... etc....”<sup>1</sup>

Peter’s first “therefore” when it comes to salvation is to consider all that we have in Christ this day. We need to be ready to serve in response to God’s kingdom. He begins by saying “-gird your minds<sup>2</sup> for action.” This phrase is a word picture which in the Greek literally is “gird up the loins of your mind.” It is incredibly vivid. In the Ancient Near East, men and women alike wore long outer robes. This primarily was due to the hot, dry, summer sun. And as wonderful as the robes were in keeping the person cool, the robe was rather impractical when it came to doing any sort of heavy work, lifting, or running. Accordingly, when the need arose, the individual would gather up their robes by pulling them up and then between their legs. Then, wrapping each side around their waste and bringing the fabric forward, they either tied the fabric or tucked it into their belt (cf. 1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 4:29; 9:1). This was known as “girding your loins” — an expression which becomes vivid when applied to the mind, “gird up the loins of your mind.”



To understand what this means, we need to understand how this expression was used in the Bible. Accordingly, turn with me to Exodus and the first Passover, where God instructs His people.

Exodus 12:11, “Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste- it is the Lord’s Passover.”

The idea here was that God’s people were to eat the Passover in a state of readiness. Think of it: They did NOT know when God would provide the way of their escape and so they needed to be ready to depart in an instant — the moment God provided the open door! In this regard, the idea is NOT “gird up your loins for action” (as is the translation of many), BUT “gird up your loins in readiness.”<sup>3</sup> That is the focus of this expression. We see this further in Job. God, speaking to Job, said this:

Job 38:3, “Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me!”

Job, you’ve been asking for Me to respond to you now for 36 chapters. I now am going to

speaking; so “gird up your loins” and so get ready to answer! (cf. Job 40:7) Clearly “action” is NOT the focus with this metaphor; rather the focus is that of “readiness”!

To a prophet who did NOT literally need to “gird up his loins” to proclaim God’s word, this is what God told Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 1:17a, “Now, gird up your loins, and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them...”

God was NOT literally calling Jeremiah to gird up his loins. RATHER, He was calling on the Prophet, when it came to his call to preach, to be ready “...in season *and* out of season...” (2 Timothy 4:2)!

From all of this I want you to see that when Peter exhorted the people of God to “Gird up the loins of their mind” he was referring to this rich Old Testament metaphor by which he called the people of God to always be in a position of readiness when it comes to God’s Kingdom. Wayne Grudem put it this way:

The NIV translation ‘prepare your minds for action’ conveys the general sense but obliterates the rich echoes of Old Testament background verses which would admonish readers to be ready to see God work and to respond to him with instant obedience... (Grudem, 2009, p. 81)

See, and this is key: you never know what God is going to do next. Christ, speaking of this Kingdom said the following:

John 5:17b, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”

From this we conclude that God is actively involved in this world. As it was true in Christ’s day, so it is in our own. Accordingly, Paul gave this incredible truth...

Ephesians 3:20a, “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think...”

When it comes to God’s work in this world, we are at a loss when it comes to most of it. We don’t see it and we can’t imagine it! In fact, recall Christ’s words to Nicodemus:

John 3:8, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

In other words, it is quite impossible to predict what God is going to do next, where He is going to work, or what door He is going to open or shut. In light of this, what ought to be the demeanor that characterizes every child of God? Christ gave it to us in Luke.

Luke 12:35-36, “Be dressed in readiness, and *keep* your lamps alight. And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks.”

What a vivid picture! We can just imagine the servant standing by the door listening for the slightest hint of His master’s return so that he might pounce on the handle at the appropriate time! That is the idea behind “the girding up of the loins of one’s mind”<sup>4</sup>- it is being ready to act when the Lord provides an opportunity!

Accordingly, we of all people must live as on the edge of our seats, ready at any time to serve the Lord! That is Peter’s first exhortation: God is doing great things in this world all around us- His Kingdom is coming; His salvific work is being accomplished! The question is, “Are you ready, in following God’s lead, to act when God gives you an opening? At every moment in your life, are you:

- (1) Looking to see where God is working? And
- (2) Are you ready to act/respond/jump in when the opportunity arises?”

If we are going to walk away with anything from Peter’s opening exhortation in vv. 1-12, it most certainly is this: God is working in this world! His salvific program — His Kingdom — cannot be thwarted! And so, whether we be...

- In prison.
- The object of persecution.
- Threatened.
- Attacked.

**\*\*OR\*\***

- Blessed.
- Honored.
- Promoted.
- Enriched.

We must always be ready to stand in the gap and serve as the Lord gives opportunity!

Luke 12:39-40a, “And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready...”

Now for us to do this, I would suggest it requires three things.

First, we must understand our role in the outworking of God's Kingdom. It is NOT to act, BUT to react to Divinely appointed opportunities for service.

2 Timothy 2:8-9, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned."

The call for the believer to "remember Jesus Christ" was given NOT because they might forget who Christ is. Rather, the call is to remember the essence of who Christ is (something believers do forget)! Who is Christ?

- God!
- The Sovereign One!
- The King of kings and Lord of lords!
- One whose will and way will not be thwarted!
- The Great I Am!
- The Savior of the world!
- The way, the truth, and the life!
- The destroyer of the works of the devil.

As that is the case, we must understand that Christ's purpose can never be thwarted such that- v. 9- while we might be enchained, the gospel is never in chains!

As that is true, it is interesting to note that a study of the outworking of God's Kingdom in the Bible reveals that never did a Christian advance God's Kingdom; that is God's job. They simply proved faithful to the opportunities that God opened before them!

The Book of Acts is filled with such examples.

- (1) God placed a lame beggar in the Temple where he remained for years... then one day Peter came along and saw it as God intended, and so shared with him the gospel; and the man was saved, Acts 3!
- (2) After openly preaching the gospel in the Temple, Peter and John were arrested. Yet this didn't thwart the outworking of the gospel, it opened the door for them to share the gospel with the Sanhedrin (Acts 4).
- (3) A crisis as it related to the early diaconal ministry of the church was the avenue whereby God expanded the ministry of the church with a newly established office- the diaconate (Acts 6).
- (4) Stephen's persecution translated to a glorious opportunity to speak the truth to the religious leaders of the day, Acts 7. Furthermore, it spawned a persecution which dispersed God's people such that the gospel was spread throughout the empire!
- (5) In Acts 8 we read of Philip sharing the gospel with an Ethiopian Eunuch. I love this! Philip wasn't looking to share the truth; this was a Divinely ordained appointment where

a non-Christian asked Philip to explain God's word.  
(6) Think of Peter's ministry to the Roman Centurion, Acts 10.

The list goes on and on with examples of God's people NOT bashing down doors in order to share the gospel, BUT simply being ready and willing to walk through the doors God was opening!

And so, to his persecuted brethren suffering under Nero's rage, Peter gave a simple calling: Keep vigilant, "gird up the loins of your mind!"- for your circumstances are NOT setbacks, BUT Divine opportunities for service!

This is so important for God's persecuted people to see. To be persecuted is to be treated in a way we don't want and to go to places we don't want to go. Accordingly, it can seem as though God is NOT on the throne calling the shots. This is why Peter's opening words (vv. 1-12) as well as his exhortation (v. 13a) are so important. Because God's Kingdom work cannot be thwarted, no matter where we are, we must be ready to serve!

In light of this, we must open our eyes and watch for Divinely appointed opportunities for service. As servants of Christ we are going to say to the Lord on the last day:

Matthew 24:37b-40, "'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.'

Of the many truths we can derive from this passage, two most certainly are: (1) Divine opportunities for service are everywhere! And (2) By accident/providence we are going to engage in Christ's service unawares!

We need to daily strive to minimize any inability we might have when it comes to seeing these opportunities! Accordingly, let's open our minds to the notion that in and through all things God is working!

## 50 Day Spiritual Adventure

Years ago, David and Karen Mains' of "Chapel of the Air" prepared their listeners for what they were calling a *50 Day Spiritual Adventure*. That particular year they were encouraging God's people to say "I spy God" whenever they saw the Lord working in their lives. The promise was this: at the end of fifty days, the participant would discover that God is working far more actively in this world than they ever imagined.

Christians, what a change it would be in our lives if we daily looked for how God was working. And then, beholding how God is working, what a change it would be if we actively participated

in God's work. If we said, "Here am I, Lord. Use me!" "Girding up the loins of our minds" means doing nothing less! Yet it does imply a little more- specifically that in fair weather, we must mend the sails. Peter later gave this exhortation:

1 Peter 3:15, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

For us "always to be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks... for an account of the hope that is in us", we must do a little prep-work. We must labor to be proficient at talking with/engaging people. If Christianity involves "sharing of the hope that is within us" it goes without saying that part of being a Christian is interacting with people. If you don't feel at least competent here, *mend the sails!*

Secondly, we must know what constitutes the hope that is in us. If we don't, then we must *mend the sails* by studying Scripture so that we do. This can be done alone or in a class on theology. It doesn't matter, provided we come to understand the hope that is in us!

Thirdly, we must have given some thought as to how we could communicate that hope in a sentence all the way up to a book (if called upon). This is but one of many areas we will be called upon to serve the Lord as He provides opportunities. Mending the Sails means that we anticipate the many life-variables we will face in the Jerusalem in which we live, and so do what is necessary in order to serve the Lord in those moments!

## References

Grudem, W. A. (2009). *1 Peter (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP Numbered))*. Chicago: IVP Academic.

## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> "I can imagine that as Peter dictated the first twelve verses of his letter, he did so in a posture of praise as he paced his room in Rome, where he was staying. Perhaps he stared out the window, directing his prayerful words partly to his secretary, Silvanus, and partly to His heavenly Father as he praised Him for the living hope believers have through Christ. But then, after he spoke the words 'things into which angels long to look' in verse 12, I can picture Peter stopping in his tracks, closing his eyes, and taking a deep breath. His tone changes from exultation to exhortation as he says, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action" (1:13). In other words, in light of the great salvation that has been lavishly poured upon us, it's time to get serious." (Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James and 1 & 2 Peter*, SNTC, pp. 154–155)

<sup>2</sup> "What is the meaning of the term mind? It refers to the believer's spiritual consciousness, that is, his conscious relationship to God. The term also means that his mind is ready and able to think actively to promote God's name, will, and kingdom (compare Matt. 6:9–10). The mind ought to be free from any hindrance (for example, fear or worry) to serve the Lord." (Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*, NTC, p. 58)

<sup>3</sup> As Peter is writing to a "pilgrim people" much like the people in the Exodus, it is believed by Bible



commentators that this is what Peter had in mind when he wrote this.

<sup>4</sup> In accord with what Peter just said 1 Peter 1:7- which tells us that Peter most likely had this passage in mind in His exhortation here- Christ continued, “Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them” (v. 37)!