

1 Peter 1:13 'Prepare Your Minds; Be Self-controlled!'

Two weeks ago we looked at v8-12 of 1 Peter 1 under the heading 'The Goal Of Our Faith and The Longing Of Prophets and Angels.' From v8 we saw that our faith (unlike that mindless notion of the faith of the unsaved) has a goal: "The Salvation of our souls." What is the meaning of this life? Faith and obedience to God through Jesus. That God who saves us, protects us, and carries us into glory! I explained, that though it doesn't feel like it at times, we are indeed "receiving the goal of our faith the Salvation of our souls." Saved once and for all time, but we are not in heaven yet. Hence we "are receiving the goal of our faith." John 14:2-3 Jesus has gone and prepared the rooms, our rooms, for us.

We saw that wonderful definition of faith: "That though have not seen him you love him and even though you do not see him now you believe in him." Believing in what we do not see to be true, that is faith. And the evidence of this "believing" is seen in our obedience to God's Son Jesus! John 20:24-29: "blessed is he who believes without seeing." And in the knowledge of these things, "we have inexpressible joy." Now words cannot express that which we have in Jesus. It is inexpressible because it is inexplicable. We should be lost for words by the realities which we have in Jesus!

And finally I said that all of the those who have lived since Jesus has come, live in tremendously privileged times. Privileged because v10 "concerning this Salvation," (these times of Jesus' first coming,) "the prophets searched intently and with the greatest care." Yes they longed to see the fulfilment of those things of which they spoke. To see those things that we can now see. The Son of Man come, live, die and rise to new life! Yes the "prophets longed to see" these very things. The realities of the Messiah fulfilled. And of Jesus' return, "even Angels long to look into these things." Yes in the same way that the prophets longed to see the day of Jesus' coming, the Angels themselves, long to see the day of His return!

And that's where we pick up the letter this morning. 1 Peter 1:13: 'Prepare Your Minds; Be Self-controlled!' Notice the very first word, yes notice that all important link word "therefore." What Peter is saying is in light of everything of which I've just told you: God and our hope, of "His great mercy." Of "our new birth." Of our "living hope through Jesus' resurrection." Our eternal "inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade." "Guarded in heaven by Jesus." That we are "shielded by God's power." That "we rejoice, though for a little while we may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials." That "like gold our faith is being tested" and purified. That "praise, honour and glory" will be ours, when Jesus comes. That true faith "believes without seeing."

In the knowledge of all of these truths, "we have in expressible joy." That we are indeed "receiving the goal of our faith the Salvation of our souls." That "prophets and Angels long to look into these things." "Therefore, prepare your minds for action." Friends may I suggest, that the most powerful weapon which the human being possesses, is without doubt the mind. We can be as physically fit as we possibly could be, and yet if our mind is not prepared, when the trial comes, whatever it may be, we will most likely fall in a heap. Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test an approved what God's will is, His good pleasing and perfect will."

Yes, "Therefore prepare your minds for action." This is not a battle of flesh and blood so much, (though for many still today,) physical danger is all too real, even death. No we will not win this

victory over the world with our physical strength alone. Ephesians 6:10-13 “Finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may build able to stand your ground, and after you've done everything, to stand.”

Friends, we must “prepare our minds.” We must like those Prophets who “searched the scriptures with the greatest care.” The Person, the Plan, the Mind and the Purpose of God! We must not be swayed by our changing circumstances. Or the downward spiralling out of control of the society in which we live, which calls (as the Bible puts it) “bad good, and good bad.” No, we must “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds.” “Therefore, prepare your minds for action.” Because only then will we be ready to do battle for Jesus within the realms of this world and the apostasy and evil of these times in which we live!

Romans 12:1 Yet again we have another “Therefore.” “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer yourselves as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.” What is Paul saying here? He is saying that our whole life is in effect an offering to God. Not just on Sunday. Not just putting money in the bag, singing hymns and attending church, No. We offer our whole life up to God, because He has given us everything. Even His One and Only Son! But how are we to do this in the context of an evil world? And those struggles which we face from within of the flesh, and the old nature? And also, the ebbing and flowing of our faith? Because spiritual highs and mountaintop experiences are wonderful and praise God for them. But the reality is, that for the true believer of Jesus, our lives in this world, are filled with far more deep valleys than mountain tops. And even when we are up on those mountaintops, the time eventually comes when we must descend again to the real world!

So how do we “prepare our minds?” Yes how do we truly live in this world for Jesus? That's the question. Well as we saw last time, the Prophets, the Angels and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus give us a clue. To “search intently.” Yes to look with a deep longing even to burn with that God given desire to open up the scriptures. Beloved, only when we search the scriptures, yes only when we searched the scriptures daily with that heartfelt intent, will we continue to have an eye upon those glories that await us. That is the only way, (through prayer,) can we “prepare our minds for action.”

In 1 Timothy 4:8 Paul puts it to Timothy like this “Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise, for both the present life and the life to come.” So we need to remember v9 “for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the Salvation of your souls.” Again v13 “Therefore prepare your minds for action.” Apply your heart, mind and soul to the scriptures, Peter is telling us. And when having done that, here is our response: “Be self- controlled, set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus is revealed.” Listen to how Proverbs 25:28 speaks of “self- control.” “Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self- control.” It's a picture of emptiness and brokenness. The city is a defenceless disgrace. It bears testimony to the people's lack of discipline, and lack of any kind of preparedness to face and do battle with the enemy. Perhaps they believed that they were so secure, that their walls would never fall. When applying this to an individual, whatever that person would contribute holds no water, so to speak. They have no credibility, because of what has been evidenced in their life. Any good that they would do, has lost its power. Proverbs 16:32 puts it this way: “Better a patient man than a warrior; a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.” What is the writer saying? The “warrior” might win all the worldly glory, the acclaim, and adoration, but the “patient person,” (that one who

controls their temper)' they are building things which last for eternity! They put the building blocks and the firm foundations of faith in God into their children by "training them up in the way they should go," Proverbs tells us. They also put the foundational truths of love and selflessness into their marriage. Seeking the good of that one whom before God they made covenant to love. To put them first! And they also invest themselves into their brothers' and sisters' in Christ lives. Not only when times are good and it's easy to do so, but when it's hard, and difficult, and it may well come with tremendous personal cost!

Yes the "patient person" or the (self- controlled person), through prayer and selfless sacrifice invests themselves in the long term goal. That "goal of our faith, the Salvation of our souls." And seeks by being obedient to Jesus, to carry others with them into glory! Peter uses the word "self-controlled" three times in this letter. Firstly, here before us: "Therefore, prepare your minds for action. Be self-controlled". Then in chapter 4:7: "The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray." And finally, chapter 5:8 "be self- controlled and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking souls to devour."

Friends can you see that our actions, (or the fruits of our bodies and lives), are a clear reflection of those preparations and meditations of our minds. Again, "self-control" comes to us through the applying of our minds to the scriptures. And praying as we do so. Where we learn more of the Character and Person of God and His son Jesus! He is our template. He is our example. He always conducted Himself with absolute "self-control." Even when He was angry, clearing out the money changers from the temple courts He acted with righteous anger, and in full control. In the garden of Gethsemane, when He sweat blood, knowing what was coming and asking God for another way, He didn't lose control, by blaming His Father. "Not my will but yours be done" He prayed. When standing before His accusers "He opened not his mouth."

And we need to be reminded that He did this in His humanity. It was not his deity that enabled Him to do this, no. He was the obedient, sinless, selfless, "self-controlled" "sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Beloved, why am I labouring this point of "self-control" this morning? Well firstly, among those things which so define our nation today, surely at the top of the list is the total lack of any kind of "self-control." And this lack, is perpetuated sadly, by the laws and courts, which supposedly govern our society! In the case of youth crime and violence, instead of enforcing laws with penalties that hold young offenders to account, they raise the age of accountability so that in effect, the young offender has not been deemed to have committed a crime at all. They learn, not "self-control", no, they learn that they are at the centre of the universe, and the world revolves around them. And the tragedy is, that this madness is perpetuated by the system, to the detriment of the young person involved. It is that same lunacy which tells kids that there are no winners and losers anymore. Everyone gets the prize.

Now I appreciate the sentiment, but that's just not reality. And we are setting all of those kids up for a tremendous fall. Because they are not being held accountable for their actions. They are not to live in a society that has boundaries. Women are abused and assaulted and even murdered every day in this country, because "self-control" is non- existent. And the reality is that our courts even sanction such evils by their refusal to call to account the lack of "self-control" of these perpetrators! Many of our politicians who should be the pillars of our society, have been exposed for their debauchery and other disgusting behaviour, and again, the absence of any kind of "self-control," while they receive their hundreds of thousands of dollars every year, and then retire to a lifestyle that most people could only dream about. It's utterly shameful! Yes friends we live in a society with an increasing

array of laws, and yet a total absence of control, particularly “self-control.” Now brethren let me say that personally, these things are very difficult to talk about. And perhaps they are very difficult for you to listen to and think about. Perhaps like me “self-control” is something that you struggle with. Maybe like me, sometimes you have foot- in- mouth disease. You know, you engage your brain only after the words have come out of your mouth. Perhaps you act and react in ways that the Spirit of God within you condemns. Yes, you speak or act in ways to your children, or your spouse, or your neighbour, or even the person at the checkout in the shops, that betrays the profession of our Saviour, that you would make known to the perishing around world you! Yes, you act in ways at times that do indeed make you feel shameful. Or worse still, such behaviours don't make you feel shame. In fact, they don't make you feel anything at all!

“Therefore prepare your minds for action. Be self-controlled.” 4:7 “The end of all things is near; therefore be clear minded and self-controlled, so you can pray.” And 5:8 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking souls to devour.” So we have “to prepare our minds, so that we be self-controlled” in our words our actions and our deeds. And “since the end of all things is near we are to be clear minded and self-controlled so that we can pray.” And we are also “to be self-controlled and alert” in our minds so that we are always on guard against our temptations and the whisperings of the Evil One, because it is indeed our soul, that he is “seeking to devour.”

Beloved, does speaking of such things make you feel uncomfortable? Do they make you feel uneasy in your seat because they hit very close to home? If they do praise God that speaking about such things is making you feel that way. Because He is speaking to you because He loves you. And rest assured, that these things have made me feel the very same way. I would find it very hard to believe, that there would be anyone here who would not in some way or other be touched by these truths of God's word. It's what we do with those proddings, those whispers, those guiding's of His Spirit that matters!

Peter continues in v13 “set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” Friends, what Peter would have us do to stay on track is to focus upon the grace which has already been given to us because of Jesus, but also the culmination of those things when the Lord returns. Can you see, that as much of a blessing that the realities of being saved (born again), through Jesus' Blood is in this life, there is a sense to which those things will pale into insignificance at the sound of the trumpet blast of the Archangel Gabriel, when the skies peel back and we see Jesus as He really is! So we need “to set our hope fully” on that day. And as we saw in v3 “our hope is living,” because Jesus lives!

Brethren the final point I want to make this morning about this “prepare your minds for action, be self-controlled” and this “set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed,” is that the older translation used to say, “Gird up your loins.” And in this context, (because if you remember they wore those long robe like garments,) in this context it meant gather your garments together, pick them up, secure them firmly so that nothing will impede your journey. Because the King is coming, and we must be ready and prepared to go and meet Him! And this is what Peter is telling us to do with our minds. Use your enlightened brain to search every corner of your life, to do away with everything and anything that hinders you and impedes you from being prepared, for the most important meeting that you will ever have. When you meet the King in the air! Yes we are to “Gird up the loins” of our minds. Because we are going on a journey. Indeed we are already on that journey, and we are in effect, waiting at the train station!

Beloved, what is it in your life that Satan is using against you to try and trick you or tempt you from missing that all important, yes that eternally important meeting with Jesus? Is it your anger, your resentment? Is it your lust or your greed? Is it your self-centeredness, or your apathy or your disbelief? Dear friends, whatever it is, you need to bring it to Jesus in repentance. In the hands of the devil the chains of sin can still bind you. He will still accuse you though he has no authority over you. But you need to confess that thing whatever it is, and bring it to the cross of Jesus!

Yes come to Jesus, “prepare your mind for action” “Gird up your loins” Yes come to Him and He will set you free! “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, be self-controlled.

Let's pray!