

I PETER

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior As God Is Holy In All His
 - A. **I Peter 1:13-16** . . . Therefore, prepare 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. [14] As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, [15] but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; [16] because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
 - B. Pray
- II. What God has done for us through saving us, He has done with the expectation that we will respond in a specific way – which includes diligently and persistently pursuing holiness in every area of our life.
 - A. **I Peter 1:13-16** . . . Therefore, prepare 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. [14] As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, [15] but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; [16] because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
 - B. The **THEREFORE** of **I Peter 1:13** refers back to all the great truths about our salvation found in **I Peter 1:1-12**.
 1. Now I want to make a point here that is important for us to remember. God does not give us information about Himself, or about the His actions and blessings toward us just to fill our heads with information. God's common practice is to give us information with the expectation that we will use the information given to pursue transformation in some particular area, or in many areas, or in **ALL** areas of our life.
 2. In other words, the **THEREFORE** does not start a new thought or begin a new lesson, as if the marvelous truths about our salvation were intended to stand alone. Rather, the **THEREFORE** completes the thought by bringing to our attention God's expected response from us to the truths revealed in **verses 1-12**.
 3. And what is God's expectation of us in relation to His salvation? His expectation is that we will pursue being holy in **ALL** our behavior, just as He is holy, and because He is holy.

4. Now to accomplish this expectation, God gives us four steps or methods or actions that, if we make good use of them, will lead us to being holy in all our behavior as He is holy.

C. Prepare your mind for action – the first step toward holiness

1. (Original) **Gird up** the loins of your mind for action – i.e., put a belt around your tunic so that the billowing material will not get in the way of making good progress as you work or walk fast or run.
2. An example from our day of girding up your loins comes from the way some young men wear their trousers so that the top of their trousers is around the bottom of their bottom. Therefore, when they want to move about, they have to hold their pants up with one hand – which leaves them encumbered in two ways. First, they have only one hand free to do other things. Second, they cannot walk or run fast given how low the crouch of their trousers is on their legs. To gird up their trousers for action, they must pull their trousers up to their waist and tighten their belt. Then their hands and legs are free to do those activities that require this kind of freedom.
 - a. A good example of this from the Bible comes from **I Kings 18:46**: “Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.”
 - b. There is no question that Elijah needed God’s supernatural empowerment to outrun Ahab’s chariot. But Elijah also needed to get the most obvious hindrance to his running fast out of the way. So he girded up or belted up his tunic before taking off.
3. In a similar way, for us to out run the alluring temptations of the world, the powerful desires of our flesh, and the tricks of the devil, and for us to begin pursuing and continue pursuing a godly life that rises to the standard of God’s holiness in **ALL** our behavior, we need God’s empowering, gracious assistance, **but we also need to think!!**
4. The reality is, we cannot make serious, worthy, and progressive progress toward being holy as God is holy in all our behavior, without engaging our mind in order to do a lot of serious thinking. For example, we need to **think deeply**, that is, we need to think beyond what is superficial or obvious or popular.
 - a. To think deeply, we must investigate and analyze what is, and compare it to what God says ought to be.
 - (1) Too many of us generally assume we have good intentions in spite of the outcome of our words or actions.

- (2) Yet how do you know your intentions are good? Is it only because you want to believe they are? Have you carefully examined the recurring outcome of your intentions to see if the outcome is what God says an outcome ought to be? Have you listened to the complaints of those affected by the outcome of your supposedly good intentions?
 - (3) My point is, to get to the truth about any intention behind any behavior, you must do far more than assume. You must think deeply. You must investigate and analyze what actually is in comparison to what God says ought to be.
 - b. To think deeply we must ponder things and meditate on things – especially things related to God, God’s word, and applying God’s word in realistic and practical ways with the goal of growing in holy living.
 - (1) Knowing the words that describe God and His ways, or even knowing the right definitions for those words does not mean you know God, himself, or His ways. It only means you know something about God and have at best a shallow and probably an impractical understanding of His ways.
 - (2) It takes pondering and meditating on who God is, what He is like, what He does, and what His word says, to go from a shallow, impractical knowledge to a knowledge that brings you into a functioning communion and companionship with God, and makes God’s way practical for your life.
 - c. Deep thinking requires an openness to being challenged and questioned. It requires being open to hearing and even considering alternative or opposing views. We must anchor all spiritual truth in God and His word, but we also are wise to consider the views and understanding of others who are serious about anchoring all spiritual truth in God and His word.
 - d. Finally, deep thinking thinks deeply, not for a moment or a day, but for the duration of one’s life.
- 5. To make serious and worthy progress toward holiness, we need to think realistically and honestly, that is, we need to face and deal with reality as it is, not as we wish it to be.
 - a. Now before we can effectively and in the most practical ways be realistic and honest about people, circumstances, and things outside ourselves, we must be realistic and honest with ourselves about ourselves.

- b. To be realistic and honest with ourselves about ourselves, we must be realistic and honest about our thoughts, our feelings, our longings, what we treasure, the way we interpret events, and we must be realistic and honest about our behavior.
 - (1) And at this point let me remind you that holding a realistic and honest view of yourself requires deep thinking in the form observing yourself so that you can engage in realistic and honest self-assessment.
 - (2) It requires an ongoing willingness to hear and consider criticism.
 - (3) It requires a humble heart and a hunger for righteousness.
 - (4) It requires looking to God for approval and acceptance, rather than to people.
 - (5) And it requires making God your primary source of security, so that you consistently feel safe in facing up to and confident in dealing with the truth about yourself.
- c. And for us Christians, we will only be as realistic and honest with ourselves as we are with God about ourselves. For example, you will not be honest and realistic about the effect of your behavior on others until you are honest about the effect of your behavior on God and on your relationship to God.
 - (1) Few Christians believe that by the time they act selfishly or sinfully toward another person, they have already rebelled against God and turned their back on Him. In fact, most Christians are offended when I suggest to them that their relationship to God is less important to them, or that they love God less than usual, when they are acting selfishly or sinfully toward others.
 - (2) Yet thinking that our current sin does not affect our relationship with God is blind to reality, and it is blatantly dishonest. What mother is not bothered by her husband's harsh treatment of her children? What father is not upset by his older son's mistreatment of his younger daughter? What boyfriend does not take it personally when his friends disrespect or make fun of his girlfriend?
 - (3) If we take it personally when a spouse, sibling, or friend mistreats someone else who is near and dear to us, then it is unrealistic and dishonest to think that God is not bothered by, and that our relationship with God is not somewhat damaged by, our mistreatment of others.

(4) But to see the reality of this, you have to think about it.

6. To make serious and worthy progress toward holiness, we need to think sensibly, that is, we need to use good judgment and common sense. We need to take a practical, common sense approach to dealing with our feelings and emotions. We need to take a practical, common sense approach to interpreting other people's behavior, and motives for their behavior. We need to take a practical, common sense approach to problem solving. And we also need to take a practical, common sense approach to the scriptures, to prayer, to knowing God, and to growing in godliness.
 - a. How many of us carefully and consistently consider the long-term consequences – both positive and negative – that are likely to be the result of our current choices and behavior?
 - b. It is my experience that too many Christians look mostly or only at the seemingly rewarding short-term consequences or payoff of their choices and behavior. And because they look no further, what seems reasonable or effective or even wise at the moment, too often turns out to be foolish and costly in the future.
 - c. For example, I met with a husband who was certain his wife did not love him. He was convinced she did things on purpose to hurt him, frustrate him, and damage the relationship between them. Things had gotten so bad between them that he felt like he no longer loved her – and didn't know if he could. In his desperation, he went so far as to make it clear to his wife he did not love her and would not until she changed – even though as a Christian he knew he should love her.
 - (1) After describing his wife's behavior, I suggested she sounded like someone who was deeply hurt as a young person and now found it very hard to trust anyone – including him.
 - (2) I also suggested that maybe it wasn't that she did not want to love him, but that her fear of trusting anyone close pushed her to the foolish and sinfully self-protective behavior of testing the genuineness and faithfulness of his love by repeatedly making it hard for him to love her.
 - (3) Then I asked him if seeing her as needy and broken in this way would have any effect on how he saw her and hence dealt with her. He immediately said yes, and pointed out that he would have far more compassion and far less anger if this were the case. He also admitted she did come from a horrible

home life and that he could see how his treatment of her might add to her challenge to trust him to love her.

(4) My point here is that this husband lacked good judgment and common sense in dealing with his wife's challenging behavior toward him. He stopped thinking, and turned to reacting against his wife's behavior toward him. In so doing, he lost sight of God's word and God's will in how he ought to love his wife, which then made it easy for him to justify his unloving, self-protective behavior toward her. And in returning evil for evil, he was adding hurt on top of hurt so that though they lived in the same home, they were living separate lives.

d. If we are going to pursue holiness in all our behavior, even in those situations that press our backs against the wall and makes us feel as if there is no hope of change, we must make proper use of sensible, practical, common sense forms of thinking.

7. To make serious and worthy progress toward holiness, we need to think humbly. Humble thinking begins with seeing ourselves more nearly as we really are. Is it not true that our tendency is to condemn others quickly, and to see others as intentional when doing wrong? Is it not true that we easily claim we had no particular, identifiable intention, and certainly no evil intention for our behavior? And is it also not true that we forgive ourselves or excuse ourselves just as quickly as we condemn others? Where is the humility thinking in this kind of behavior on our part? To deal honestly with God, others, and ourselves, we need to think as those who are humble.

8. To make serious and worthy progress toward holiness, we need to think frequently, and with much prayer – so as to remove or minimize those moments when we are thoughtless and careless, and to seek heavenly wisdom, insight, and understanding.

III. Conclusion

A. Please hear me on this. No one can get to true godliness of heart, mind, and behavior without plenty of sound, sensible, frequent thinking. And if we are going to think in the way required to pursue holiness of life – a holiness that touches every area of our life – we must prepare, or gird up our mind for such thinking.

- B. In other words, we must clear out the junk thinking and fear based thinking and selfish thinking and lustful thinking and worldly thinking and foolish thinking and poor me thinking and lazy thinking and unfocused thinking and bitterness and anger and living in denial so that we can give the kind of mental attention required to seriously and deliberately heading in the direction of being holy like God is holy in all areas of our life.

- C. For us Christians, the most common outcome of shallow, careless, worldly thinking is shallow, careless, worldly Christianity. Therefore, if we are to proceed toward a Christian life that is holy, mature, and Christ-like, we must engage our mind in those ways that enable us to become holy like God is holy in all our behavior. And if we are going to engage our mind in this way, we must prepare it, or gird it up for deep, serious, sensible, realistic, honest, practical, humble thinking.