

PENN FREE METHODIST CHURCH
BIBLE STUDY

22nd March 2017

1 Peter 1, v13-17

**KEY TO
THE LAYOUT
OF THIS STUDY**

**The verses being
studied are in
bold type**

*Supporting and
illustrative Scripture
texts are in italics*

The explanation and
commentary on the
verses being studied
and of the
supporting texts
are in normal typeface



**APPLYING
THE MIND TO
THE PURSUIT
OF HOLINESS**

v13. “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”. The phrase "the revelation of Jesus Christ" refers to the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed to the world as its all-conquering King and Supreme Judge. This is the day when He will return to this earth, and be avenged upon all those who have rebelled against Him. Peter has been speaking of the believer's great salvation, a salvation which will be experienced in all its fulness upon this day of "the revelation of Jesus Christ". The believer has a glorious inheritance awaiting him in heaven, but this glory is still future. First of all, says Peter, before taking up his heavenly inheritance, the believer must persevere in faith upon the earth, and must do so in an environment of an unbelieving world, and of many trials upon his faith. "Wherefore", says Peter, in view of this need to persevere on the path to your eternal inheritance, “gird up the loins of your mind”. Fix your hopes upon the future and final manifestation of God's grace, the fulness of salvation which shall be yours when Christ appears as Judge. If you focus upon that day, then it will help you in the vital task of persevering. So we today as Christians must live out our lives in the context of the coming "revelation of Jesus Christ".

"Our conversation (or citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil.3:20). So even whilst still upon this earth, believers actually belong to heaven, and are awaiting Christ's coming from heaven to fetch those who are His. They are awaiting the glory of which Peter spoke in v4 : the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you". Peter is saying here in v13 that the anticipation of this heavenly inheritance should be affecting the way in which we live now, for Christ is coming as a Judge.

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). So the revelation of the Lord Jesus, as He returns as Judge, will be a most dreadful occasion for the unbelieving.

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 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 3:10-11). So the prospect of inescapable future judgement upon this world should have a sobering effect upon all men, making them to consider very carefully how they are behaving right now. Peter may also be referring in the above quotation to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the final collapse of Old Testament Israel's world as they knew it.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). Peter has already stated that believers' faith will be tried in order to strengthen and purify it for the Lord's return in judgement. So we again see his focus upon the coming day when all will have to give an account. Are we persevering in faith and holy conduct, even when we have serious problems, even when we are under great pressure, even when things are going wrong for us, or is our holiness and love for God confined to the good times? Is the prospect of coming judgement moving us daily to ongoing faith and obedience?

v13. "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". We have two metaphors here. The one concerns the long flowing garments worn by men in these ancient times. In order to work or to run they would tie up their robes around their waist, so that they had freedom of movement.

"(Elijah) girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel" (1Kings 18:46).

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord" (Luke 12:35-36). So the servants, because their loins are girt, are ready, for example, to run out and fetch in their master's baggage. Thus to gird up the loins means to be prepared for action. Peter here applies the metaphor not to physical, but to mental activity. So he is speaking of mental preparedness. We must be mentally prepared for "the revelation of Jesus Christ", for His appearing as our Judge.

God has made us as rational, thinking beings. He wants us to use our minds in his service of him. Each day that we live is a preparation for the day of Christ's return, and so each day we must have

minds alert to the imminence of judgement and therefore to the manner in which we are conducting ourselves. So mental resolution is part of the Christian life. We must think about being Christians. We must apply our minds to the pursuit of holiness, and to do this we need clear, properly working minds.

This is why people must never allow their minds to become confused and malfunctioning and artificially stimulated through the influence of drugs or excessive alcohol. Just as our bodies need to be kept physically fit, so our minds need to be kept spiritually fit. We do this by means of prayer and Bible study and meeting with God's people. We do it by ensuring that our minds do not focus upon that which is unwholesome. We must exercise caution regarding what we are prepared to look at in magazines, at theatres and on television. We must take heed that we are not distracted by the allurements of this world.

v13. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober". The second metaphor in this verses is that of being sober. It is very similar to the first. To be sober is to be mentally alert. One of the commentators on 1Peter rightly states concerning this phrase, "They that would make progress in their journey towards their heavenly inheritance must study sobriety" (Nisbet, p35). A drunken man staggering down the street will soon fall over, because he is not alert enough to avoid the obstacles before him. Because he is not sober, danger is lurking at every turn. This is an apt metaphor for our spiritual lives. We must take care that our spiritual senses are not dulled, so that we fail to notice the obstacles which would mar our Christian walk. It is so easy for Christians to get side-tracked by this world and to lose their "first love", their initial devotion to Christ.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2). It is so easy for believers to forget the eternal perspective, and to become spiritually lazy and indifferent. Solomon is a classic example of one who was a true believer, and who knew great spiritual blessing, yet as time went on he allowed the passing things of this world to entice him, and make him stumble. So let us watch and be sober.

v14. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; v15. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; v16. Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy". We must gird up the loins of our minds and practice mental sobriety in order to be holy. 'conversation' means general behaviour, not just speech, but it certainly includes our speech; and notice how Peter speaks of "all manner of conversation". There must be no aspect of our behaviour, no department of our lives, which is not characterised by holiness. Nor must we ever be content with a modicum of holiness. We are called to be as holy as God himself is holy, for as believers in Christ, we have become children of God, and partakers of His nature. We have received the very Spirit of God to dwell within us, and we should therefore be manifesting a family likeness to our heavenly Father. If we are God's own children, then we shall not wish to dishonour our Father's name in any way.

"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The true Christian will have an abhorrence of his former sin.

“The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). So again we see how the exhortation to holiness is made in the context of our Lord's Second Coming.

v17. “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear”. We are merely sojourners here on this earth, for heaven is our true home. Now if we actually belong to heaven, God's dwelling place, then surely this exalted status will be reflected in the way that we behave. There should be something really different about us. It should be obvious by our conduct that we belong, not to this world, but to a totally different and superior realm.

“We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). If we really are sons of God, then we are being recreated in God's image in the power of his Spirit.

v17. “... who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work”. Note how Peter again refers to God's coming as Judge, and he makes it clear that there will be no special cases or exclusions upon that day.

“(Peter), opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). People tend to make excuses for their sins, but God's judgement sees through all.

v17. “... pass the time of your sojourning here in fear”. We learn that there is such a thing as wholesome fear in the Christian life. This is not a morbid, trembling fear, for we rejoice in our salvation. Nevertheless, we should be terrified at falling into sin, because we know that Christ is returning to judge every single thought, word and deed. We are saved by grace, and not by works, but we must still "work out (our) own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Being a Christian is a serious business, and our righteous Judge will not indulge any man's sin.

Conclusion

So the seriousness of holiness is Peter’s emphasis in these verses 13-17. We have to live out our lives in the context of "the revelation of Jesus Christ", the day when He will return as the Judge of all flesh. As we fix our sights upon that day, it will help us in the vital task of persevering in faith and obedience. The anticipation of receiving our heavenly inheritance should be affecting the way in which we live now.

Are we those who are persevering in faith and holy conduct, even when we have serious problems, even when we are under great pressure? That is our calling. To help us to persevere, we have to gird up the loins of our mind. We must be mentally prepared for "the revelation of Jesus Christ". Each day we must have minds alert to the imminence of judgement. We need mental resolution to lead the Christian life. This is being "sober". We must take care that our spiritual senses are not dulled, so that we fail to notice the obstacles which would mar our Christian walk. Let us beware lest our spiritual alertness be spoilt by the allurements of this world. There must be no aspect of our behaviour which is not characterised by holiness, as we prepare for the return of Christ as our Judge. Let us have a healthy fear of sin, so that when our Lord appears, we shall not be ashamed, but shall rather hear the Lord say to us, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”.