

1 Peter 1:13–16

Introduction

Over the last several weeks, we've been treated to what I think we can truly describe as a breathtaking display of the abounding mercies of God.

He has **begotten us anew** to a living **HOPE** *through* the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **to an INHERITANCE** that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for **us, who** by God's power are **being guarded** through faith for a **SALVATION** ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this **WE GREATLY REJOICE**, **though** now for a **little while, if necessary**, we **have been grieved** by various trials, **so that** the **tested genuineness of our faith**—**more precious** than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in **praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**, who, though not having seen Him, **we love Him**, and though not now seeing him, **we believe in him** and **[WE] REJOICE GREATLY** with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of our faith, the **SALVATION** of our souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that would come to US searched and inquired carefully, **inquiring which [time] or what sort of time the Spirit of Christ in them** was making known when he witnessed beforehand to **the sufferings that would come to Christ** and the glories which would follow after these [sufferings]. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but **US**, in the things that have **NOW** been announced to **US** through those who first preached the good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels **long to look**.

What a lavish feast this is! What a truly overwhelming display of the abounding mercies of God! But it's impossible to **truly partake** of this feast only to grow fat and lazy. It's impossible to **truly witness** this display with eyes of faith only to clap our hands and call out our praises and then return to "life as usual." It's **impossible**. So after finishing his first sentence (verses 3-12), Peter begins his very next sentence with *this* biblically and theologically *rich* word:

I. 1 Peter 1:13 — Therefore...

All that's about to follow will only be possible, and can only make sense, in light of all that's come before. All that's about to follow **must flow from** and be the **natural fruit of** all that's come before. So what is it that follows? What is it that comes after?

II. 1 Peter 1:13 — Therefore, having prepared your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Here's the very first "imperative" in Peter. An imperative is a command. It's something expected and required. It's a non-negotiable. And this next section of Peter (through chapter 2 and verse 3) is actually built **around** five separate imperatives. We have this first imperative here in verse 13:

“Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” And then the next four imperatives are these:

- 1 Peter 1:15 — ...**be holy in all your conduct**...
- 1 Peter 1:17 — ...**conduct yourselves with fear** throughout the time of your exile...
- 1 Peter 1:22 — ...**love one another earnestly**...
- 1 Peter 2:2 — ...**long for the pure spiritual milk**...

Now did you notice how all five of these imperatives are speaking not *only* to our outward actions, but even to the inward condition of our *hearts*? How can the Apostle Peter do this? How can he **command** not only our actions, but even **command** our hearts? God has every right to command our innermost thoughts and motives no less than our outward actions. And He does. He always has even from the very beginning. The real question is this, why are we not overwhelmed with a heavy, unbearable burden when the Apostles of Jesus Christ write to us with these commands? Why are these imperatives that govern every inward thought and motive as well as every outward speech and action—why are these imperatives not a heavy weight and a burden that drags us down, leaving us always discouraged or even resentful? The answer is so simple, but so essential for all of us to grasp every single day that we live our lives on this earth. The answer is “**therefore**.”

Every single one of Peter’s imperatives comes to us only **after** Peter’s recital of the abounding mercies of God **which He has already worked in our lives**. We see this same pattern everywhere throughout Scripture, but we can note especially the following two examples:

- Romans 12:1 — I appeal to you **therefore** [cf. chapters 1-11], brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship...
- Ephesians 4:1 — I urge you **therefore** [cf. chapters 1-3]—I, a prisoner for the Lord—to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...

Here in 1 Peter, there is not a single imperative anywhere in verses 3-12. Instead, we can say that verses 3-12 are all “indicative.” In other words, in verses 3-12 there’s no wishing, there’s no exhorting, there’s no commanding; instead, it’s just telling us from beginning to end how things *are*, and what *has* happened to us, and what the reality *is*. And so now, as all of God’s imperatives flow to us **from out of** and always **in the midst of** these realities, we hear these imperatives as our true delight and joy. *Even as we still do struggle* against the lusts of our former ignorance, we know that what our hearts truly and ultimately delight in are the imperatives of the one who **has caused us** to be begotten anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are set free to obey God’s commands because we obey **not in order** that we might be begotten anew, but rather **because**—by faith, and according to the abounding mercies of God—we **have been** begotten anew. Brothers and sisters, the indicative of verses 3-12 doesn’t make the imperatives that follow any less “imperative,” or any less required, but it does mean that when these imperatives come to us, they come to a people whose obedience has already been secured and guaranteed by the free grace and love of God in Christ, who is blessed forever and ever. Amen!

So let us come, now, to the imperatives of Peter with glad and humble hearts – desiring, and purposing, and striving to obey, to live out in practice who and what we are in Christ.

III. 1 Peter 1:13 (TAKE TWO) — Therefore, having prepared your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Before the main imperative verb (“Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”) we have two participles. We can think of participles in English as words with “**ing**.” So in the first half of this verse we read: “**having** prepared your minds for action, and **being** sober-minded...” There are a **lot** of these participles—or these “ing’s”—in Peter, and even as they are right here, they’re often surrounding “imperatives.” In other words, the participles are explaining and exploring the imperatives; they’re helping us to better understand what the imperatives are really commanding. So, in order for us to really and truly set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ we must first of all have prepared our minds for action.

What Peter actually says is this: “having girded up the loins of your mind.” This is a word picture that certainly doesn’t make any sense to us in our day, but in Peter’s day it was very vivid. People in Peter’s day wore very long, loose-fitting garments and robes that could very easily encumber and inhibit and restrict when you’re trying to accomplish various tasks. So, if you were preparing for a journey, or for work, or for battle you would gather up the loose folds of your garment that hung below your knees and then tuck them into your belt. This was referred to simply as “girding the loins.”

- Jeremiah 1:17 (cf. Exod 12:11; Luke 12:35) — But you [Jeremiah], dress yourself for **work** [gird up your loins]; arise, and say to them everything that I command you.
- 2 Kings 9:1 (cf. 4:29; 1 Kings 18:46) — Elisha... called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, “Tie up your garments [gird up your loins], and take this flask of oil in your hand, and **go to Ramoth-gilead.**”
- Nahum 2:1 — The scatterer has come up against you. Man the ramparts; watch the road; dress for **battle** [gird up your loins]; collect all your strength.
- Job 38:1–3 (cf. 40:7) — The LORD answered Job: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for **action** [gird your loins (for wrestling)] like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.

And now, here in 1 Peter, we learn that in order for us to really and truly set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ we must first of all have girded up the loins of our mind. The point is that our minds are to be prepared at all times for a disciplined effort. Whether you want to think of a battle, or of a long journey, or of a productive day’s work, we must be a people who are always resolved, and determined, and mentally ready. Think of the athletes competing in the Olympics. You know that before each event, they’re “in the zone,” they’re thoughts are focused, they have indeed girded up the loins of their mind for the task ahead. This is the picture that Peter sets before us here. As Christians who would run the race, fight the fight, and engage in the work, we **must** first of all gird up the loins of our mind.

Once we've girded up the loins of our mind (aorist tense), then we are to continue on in a constant state of being **sober-minded** (present tense). (cf. Achtemeier) This is actually just the word for being "sober" (the opposite of being drunk with wine). But since Peter's point isn't just that that we should avoid drinking too much alcohol, we translate: "being sober-**minded**." So what do you think this means? What should this look like in our day to day lives? I think it will help if we look at the *four* other places where we find this word in the New Testament.

- 2 Timothy 4:3-8 — The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own **lusts**, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be **sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry**. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.**

Did you see how being "sober-minded" is contrasted with the people who accumulate teachers to suit their own lusts? The word for "lusts" here is just a reference to *all* of the self-seeking, self-gratifying **desires** of our sinful human hearts. And it's in contrast to these lusts, Paul says, that Timothy is to be "sober-minded."

Now notice what being "sober-minded" is connected with: "Be sober-minded, **endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry**." Do you see again that our thinking is always what directly produces *all* of our doing? For Timothy, then, to be sober-minded will mean enduring, and working, and serving.

But then notice that in this same context of being "sober-minded" Paul especially emphasizes the future hope that we have: "Henceforth there is laid up for me [after Paul's suffering] the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."

- 1 Peter 4:2-7 — Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human **lusts** but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, **lusts**, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry... **The end of all things is at hand**; therefore be **self-controlled and sober-minded** for the sake of your prayers.

Once again, we see that to be sober-minded is the opposite of living to satisfy our lusts – our self-promoting desires. We also see that being sober-minded is connected with the idea of being self-controlled and watchful in prayer. And finally, we see that being sober-minded is grounded in the hope that we have ("the end of all things is at hand"). So now let's look for these same three ideas again in 1 Thessalonians chapter five.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:5-9 — We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us **keep awake and be sober**. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and

those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us **be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Drunkenness is just a symbol for all the lusts and self-promoting desires of our hearts. But then we see once again that the opposite of this drunkenness is to be sober-minded—awake and watchful and alert, and so always ready for battle with our breastplate and helmet put on. And finally, we see again the reminder of our hope: “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Before we come back to chapter one of 1 Peter, let’s look at the last chapter in 1 Peter, and the last time that this word appears.

- **1 Peter 5:8–10** — **Be sober-minded; be watchful.** Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **Resist him, firm in your faith,** knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. **And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.**

In Peter, “whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human **lusts** but for the will of God.” So what Peter says here is that in order to endure suffering faithfully (refusing the lusts of our sinful hearts), we must be sober-minded and **watchful** for the purpose of **resisting the devil, firm in our faith.** And finally, this call to be sober-minded is grounded once again in the future hope that we have: “After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

Are you seeing this constantly repeated pattern and message? Are you beginning to get a grasp and a feel for what it means to be “sober-minded”? So, now let’s come back to our passage here in 1 Peter chapter one: “Therefore, having girded up the loins of your mind, and being sober-minded, **set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**”

We’ve already been begotten anew to a living hope. That living hope, and that future reality is now ours. But now it remains for us to **flesh out** this hope *today* – in other words, to live *now* in a way that is fully, 100% **in keeping** with this future hope that we have. So let’s remember what our future hope *is*: It’s the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (v. 13) It’s an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us. (v. 4) It’s praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (v. 7) It’s the salvation of our souls. (v. 9) On the one hand, it’s this future hope—grasped by faith—that is to cause us to be **sober-minded** (maybe I could even say “serious minded”) in this present age. On the other hand, it’s only when we’re truly being sober-minded that we can ever say we’re setting our hope fully and completely on the grace that will be brought to us. Brothers and sisters, in order to fight and wrestle and run and work and endure suffering we must be sober-minded, having girded up the loins of our minds—we must set our hope **fully** on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Are you seeing what a stark contrast there must be between this life that's in keeping with the hope set before us, and a life that only takes into account the here-and-now? Are you seeing how a life that's fully and completely shaped by our future hope is the total, polar opposite of a life that's given over to the passing lusts of the present? And so it's in this light that we come now to the second imperative—the second command—in Peter:

IV. 1 Peter 1:14–16 — As obedient children, not being conformed to the lusts of your former ignorance — but as he who called you is holy, you also **be holy in all your conduct**, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Here's the *main* thing we need to see: It's impossible to fully understand and embrace this second imperative to “be holy in all our conduct” unless we have first of all understood and embraced the imperative in verse 13: “Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” I really like how one commentator puts it: “**Hope** is seen here as the fundamental posture of Christian conduct... **hope** leads one not to live ‘profanely,’ but ‘in a holy manner.’” (Goppelt) Another commentator says, “The certainty of our hope has a remarkable **effect** on our lives. Hoping Christians *cannot* live carelessly, seeking self-indulgence and pleasure.” (Clowney) In other words, hope isn't just something that encourages us and comforts us; hope is a powerfully effective agent for **sanctifying** us and **purifying** us.

Now, before we came to “imperative #2,” did you notice the participle (the “*ing*”) that came before it?—“Not being conformed to the lusts of your former ignorance.” And there's that word, “lusts,” again – it's the same word (or concept) that we've seen in every other passage where we have a reference both to our hope and to being sober-minded. The word for “lusts” is really just the ordinary word for “**desires**,” and what the Bible teaches us is that we are all driven every single second of every single minute of every single hour of every single day of our lives by desires. The Bible also teaches us that at the end of the day, there are only two kinds of desires: the desires that grew out of our former ignorance when we didn't know God and when we were utterly without hope in this world (cf. Acts 3:17; 17:30; Eph. 4:18), and the desires that grow, now, out of our knowledge of God and the hope that we have as His obedient children. It's the first kind of desires that we call “lusts.” And so we see that “lusts” isn't just a word for perverse sexual cravings, “lusts” is actually a word that rightly describes *all* of the self-seeking desires that characterized every single moment of our lives before Christ. But brothers and sister, that was “before”! Notice how Peter is so careful to point out that these were the lusts of our **former** ignorance. Praise God!!! But what are we *now*?

Peter says that what we **are now** is “obedient children.” He's not telling us to be obedient; he's saying that this is what we are because we are those who've already obeyed the Gospel of Jesus Christ.* (cf. Rom. 1:5; 16:26; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17) In fact, this is what we *are* because God Himself has begotten us anew as His obedient children. So we could paraphrase: “**As the obedient children that you are,**† not being conformed to the lusts of your **former** ignorance; but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

* Cf. Clowney; Michaels

† Cf. Michaels; NCV; BGD

We'll talk more about this beautiful reality of God's "**call**" later on in Peter, but right now I just want us to see that Peter is bringing us back once again to God's sovereign **grace already** poured out in our lives. As the one **who called us** is holy, so also we must be holy in all our conduct.

Now, since this is an imperative—since it's a command in God's word—shouldn't we be deeply concerned to know exactly what this requires? Peter quotes from Leviticus where this phrase is repeated five separate times: "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8) The book of Leviticus described an entire way of life for Israel that was different and set apart from the nations that surrounded them (including food laws, purity laws, etc.; cf. Lev. 18:2-4). And so also the New Testament calls us as the New Israel to an **entire way of life** that's different and set apart from the world in a far deeper and more radical way than anything we'll ever read about in the book of Leviticus. Why is this? It's because now the holiness of Leviticus has been reinterpreted in light of the coming of Christ and so now especially in light of our future "living hope" – in light of the grace that is to be brought to us at the future revelation of Jesus Christ.[‡] And so we see that to be holy in all our conduct, even as the one who called us is holy, is to have every single aspect of our lives **wholly shaped** by our newfound knowledge of God and the future hope that we have as His obedient children.

We could say, then, that to be holy **is** to **hope**, and to hope **is** to be **holy**, and where there isn't the one, there is never the other. (cf. 1 Jn. 3:2-3) Has there ever been a holy person who wasn't full of hope. Or perhaps we should ask: Has there ever been a person growing in holiness who has not also been growing in hope? This is **SO** important for us to grasp! If "lusts" is a word that rightly described **all** of the self-seeking desires that characterized every single moment of our lives before Christ, then "holiness" is a word that **must** come to rightly describe **all** of our conduct—**all** of our living and breathing—**now** that we have come to know God – **now** that we have been begotten anew to a living hope. **This** is what we mean when we say that to be holy **is to hope**, and **to hope is** to be holy. As one commentator says, "The pattern of holy living cannot be reduced to a limited number of 'holy' actions... [Holiness] does not require encyclopedic grasp of endless directives and prohibitions. It flows from the heart." (Clowney) Or we could say: It flows ceaselessly and uninterruptedly from a hope that is set fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, we've already been begotten anew to a living hope. That living hope, and that future reality is now ours. But now it remains for us to **flesh out** this hope **today** – to live **now** in a way that is fully, 100% **in keeping** with this future hope that we have – to be holy in all our conduct even as the one who called us is holy. This is an **imperative**. This is what we **must** do. This is what we are **commanded** to do. So are we overwhelmed, now, with a heavy, unbearable burden? How **far** this is from the truth! **Even as** we **still do struggle** against the lusts of our former ignorance, we know that what our hearts truly and ultimately delight in are the imperatives of the one who **has caused us** to be begotten anew to a living hope through the

[‡] So one commentator says: "[Here is] a pattern of life that transforms every day, every moment, every thought, every action... to be holy 'as God is holy' includes a full and pervading holiness that reaches to every aspect of our personalities. It involves not only avoiding outward sin but also maintaining an instinctive delight in God and his holiness as an undercurrent of heart and mind throughout the day." (Grudem)

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. **And so as we set our hope fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, holiness becomes the constant, unceasing delight of our hearts.**

“Therefore, having girded up the loins of your mind, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not being conformed to the lusts of your former ignorance; but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”