

Conviction or Compromise

I Peter 1:13-14

Turn in your Bibles to I Peter 1:13-14. After my study and preparation time I quickly determined that instead of working through verses 13-16 as originally intended, we are only going to address verses 13-14 today and 15-16 next week. So, those who attend Adult Impact have some additional questions for next week.

I also will be altering my preaching schedule slightly. Since I'm on that, let me also say that on 4/2 Randy will be preaching for me. We will be out of town. On Wednesday, 4/5 Allistair Begg will be here via a DVD sermon. Come out to both.

With that, please stand as I read this short section of Scripture – I Peter 1:13-16.

“So brace up your minds, and, as men who know what they are doing, rest the full weight of your hopes on the grace that will be yours when Jesus Christ reveals himself. Live as obedient children before God. Don't let your character be molded by the desires of your ignorant days, but be holy in every department of your lives, for the one who has called you is himself holy. The scripture says: 'Be holy, for I am holy'.” (The Phillips)

“So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives. Don't lazily slip back into those old grooves of evil, doing just what you feel like doing. You didn't know any better then; you do now. As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, "I am holy; you be holy." (The Message)

Our text begins with a “wherefore”, “therefore”, or “so” depending on your translation.

It is a transitory word linking the previous section

with what is to come. It moves the reader from a statement of fact to application and action. Here's what you are to do because of what you know about your salvation. Literally it could read “in view of the fact that even though you are undergoing various kinds of trials, even severe trials, yet because your inheritance waits for you, gird up your loins, put your mind to action.”

Peter gives us five exhortations in this passage. The first, second, and fourth are participles being both a verb and an adjective that are subordinate on the other two which are commands.

1. Prepare your minds for action
2. Be self-controlled
3. Set your hope fully on grace
4. Do not conform to evil desires
5. Be holy

From verse 13 let's consider this morning guiding attitudes.

I. GUIDING ATTITUDES – v. 13

The first attitude is this:

A. Be Prepared – v. 13a

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action”

The KJV states it this way “Gird up the loins of your mind”.

From the philosophical wisdom of Calvin and Hobbes, Calvin is rifling through his dresser drawers in a bit of a panic and very stressed out. Frantically he hollers to his mom who is in another room wondering where his cartoon character underpants are. She responds that they are in the laundry so he should wear something else. In total frustration he retorts “I hate it when I can't gird my loins with funny animals.”

Peter uses a very familiar scene as a vivid reminder to “gird up the loins of their mind”. In Biblical days the fashion was that men wore long, flowing robes

that extended to the ground. They were great for a leisure stroll into town or while shopping or lounging at home. But when it came to work or war these long, flowing garments hindered swift movement or immediate response. Now I've never tried running in a long dress so I'm only going on what I read or imagine that they got in the way. The remedy for this hindrance was to gather up the material above the knees, tuck it between their legs behind them, divide the material in the back and wrap it around the waist in the front. They would then either tie it up or tuck it into a belt or sash that was around the waist. One author described it like putting on a cloth diaper. Now they could work or do battle with greater ease.

Now that you have that picture, Peter says we are to "gird up the loins of our mind" or "prepare your minds for action". It's in a tense which means that it is a past, once for all act. My personal preference is the KJV because the word speaks of the haste with which one is to be prepared or ready to respond. You never know when the enemy is going to attack so always be ready. Peter is going to remind us in a few chapters to be on the ready because our enemy, like a roaring lion is lurking and looking for someone to devour.

When a soldier gathered up his garments around him, it meant that he was serious about the battle he was about to enter. It was life or death. Paul says it a bit differently in Ephesians 6, but with the same end result when he exhorts us to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand in the evil day, instructing us to gird our loins with the belt of truth.

Peter is calling us to action, not for a physical battle, but a battle that is mental and spiritual in nature. What it boils down to is a matter of our will. It is a conscious decision to stay mentally ready. It is in the battle of the mind and heart that the actions of the feet and hands follow. So Peter exhorts us to "prepare our minds for action."
Philippians 4:6-9

One author suggests that the "combination virtues listed in verses 8-9 is sure to produce a wholesome thought pattern, which in turn will result in a life of moral and spiritual excellence." When our minds are troubled by doubt, confusion, worry, and anxiety it is difficult to stay mentally sharp against the attack of our spiritual enemy. Paul suggests that prayer offered with thanksgiving results in a mind and heart that is settled by the overwhelming peace of God which sets guard around them to protect us from worry and anxiety.

If I had a nickel for every time I heard a coach tell a player to get his mind back in the game, I'd be a pretty rich guy. You aren't your best when you are preoccupied with other things on your mind. You lose focus. You lose the ability to respond quickly, or to make right decisions or to be effective or efficient. You lose passion and zeal and determination.

Peter is calling us to bring our whole being fully under the lordship of Christ by having our minds prepared for action.

John MacArthur writes that "spiritual stability is a result of how a person thinks."

In verse 6 of Philippians 4 we are told not to be anxious about anything. That word means to divide the mind. James says that a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Pastor Robert Jeffress discusses several things that can cause us to worry. Understanding what these are will help us be prepared to stand against them.

One cause of worry is a wrong value system. When we build our security around things that are temporal vs. eternal we can lose peace and be robbed of joy. Jesus once asked the question "what good is it to gain the whole world and yet forfeit your soul to hell." He also said that instead of storing up stuff here where rust and moth can

destroy or that can be robbed we are to instead store our treasures in heaven where those things can't be affected by decay or deterioration or robbery.

A second source of worry is unconfessed sin. When we continue living in some sin we know displeases God, we can expect, according to His Word, to be disciplined. I never had to fear being disciplined by my mom or dad as long as I did what was right, but when I did something wrong there was always the fear of them finding out and then suffering the consequences of my wrong actions.

A third source of anxiety is from satanic attack. That's why Paul encourages us to put on the full armor of God. If instead of fearing attack from our spiritual enemy we lived confidently in the power of the Jesus Christ knowing He has conquered death and the devil and given us the armor necessary to vanquish our foe, then there is nothing to fear.

When we obsess over things, our minds are not girded or prepared for action. Philippians 4:7 invites us instead to pray about such things and vs. 8 then calls us to think on things that provide spiritual stability and result in peace and joy.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words defines it this way: "We are to make these things the subjects of our thoughtful consideration or carefully reflect on them." We are to "dwell on" or "think on" these things. The Phillips translation says we are to "fix" our minds on those things. The verb form is a call for this action to be a habitual discipline. The Bible is clear that we are the products of our thoughts. Proverbs 23:7 "For as he thinks in his heart so is he."

What we do results from what we think. What we habitually think about has significant implications. Paul exhorts us to think about right things. Think about things that are true by reading God's Word. I would rather cut my workout short in the morning than cut my devotion time short.

Think about things that are honorable. It comes from a word that means to revere or to worship. So our thoughts should be on worship and adoration of God. If our minds are rightly focused on Him then what we think about will result in praise and glory and things that are, well, honorable rather than dishonorable or that cause anxiety.

Think about things that are right. These things are in line with God's holy standard. We will talk more about this when we get to verses 15-16. But suffice it to say here that when our thoughts are on right things by following God's standard, then we will do what is right.

David gave me permission to share this with you. A couple weeks ago he had a test in one of his classes. The day before the test there was a substitute teacher who had written stuff on the board. When it came time for the test, that stuff was still on the board. One thing on the board was an answer to a question David didn't know. He inadvertently saw the answer and wrote it down. Rethinking what he had just done he erased his answer leaving the line blank, and then wrote a note for the teacher explaining that he saw the answer on the board, written in the answer but then erased it, choosing rather to do the right thing by leaving it bland and getting the question wrong than to leave it knowing he had cheated.

Thinking about things that are right leads to actions that are right.

Think about things that are pure, holy, or morally clean. In I Timothy 5:22 the word is translated "free from sin."

Think about things that are lovely, things that please God.

Think about things that are of good reputation, things that are highly regarded or well thought of.

About these six things John MacArthur concludes that “the key to godly living is godly thinking.” Proverbs 4:23 “Watch your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”

We are to be prepared in our minds. Be ready for action. There is a vivid example of this back in the Old Testament. We find it in Exodus 12:11. Nine plagues had decimated Egypt, but God had one final plague that would leave an indelible mark on both the nation of Egypt and the nation of Israel who was held in bondage. God had instructed Moses to inform the Israelites about one final deadly plague. It would be so devastating that Pharaoh would drive them out of the land. The angel of death would sweep through the land that night and any home where there was no lamb’s blood smeared on the door posts would be visited by this angel bringing death to any first born in the home. To keep the angel of death from entering their home, each Israelite family was to prepare themselves by observing a Passover meal. They were to slaughter a lamb and then take its blood and smear it on the door posts. When the angel saw the blood he would pass over that home. As they ate the Passover meal, they were instructed to gird their loins, have their sandals on and their staff in hand. In this way when the word came to leave, they would be fully prepared to go at a moment’s notice.

Peter exhorts us to be ready by putting away things in our mind that hinder our spiritual progress and prevent the Holy Spirit from working. Is your mind prepared?

The next attitude is to be self-controlled.

B. Be Self-controlled – v. 13b

The KJV says we are to sober. The dictionary defines it as not being drunk; temperate in any way; or serious. Temperate means not self-indulgent or not indulging in one’s own desires or impulses. Or simply as the NIV renders it to be self-controlled.

We can indulge our desires in so many different ways that can control us. It doesn’t have to be from alcohol or drugs. We can indulge in overeating or over spending. We can over indulge in watching TV or obsessing over anything. It is anything that dulls the mind or divides our attention and keeps it from being focused and sharp, anything that impairs reasoning, actions, speech and so on. In a spiritual sense, don’t allow things to enter the mind that can cause spiritual impairment, loss of sound judgment or loss of moral action. Don’t lose spiritual control by following the world’s system.

Peter uses it in a figurative manner here meaning to be free from every form of mental and spiritual drunkenness or excess that otherwise dulls our ability to think clearly or that keeps us from hearing the Lord speak through His Word. We allow those things to control us rather than allowing God’s Spirit to control us. Paul says “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18) Debauchery means sin, wickedness, depravity or corruption. Instead we are to be filled with the Spirit or controlled by the Spirit.

The ESV states it this way: “Let the Spirit fill and control you.”

So when it says to be self-controlled, it implies that we are allowing the Holy Spirit to be the one to guide us and lead us in order to think and do right. When He controls our thoughts and actions, other things won’t distort or control our thinking, they won’t cause worry or fear. We are to be sober.

We are to have the attitude of being prepared in our mind for action and being self-controlled. We also see in this verse the attitude of being hopeful.

C. Be Hopeful – v. 13c

“set your hope on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

This does not refer to Christian living in a state of hopefulness to the end of this life through all kinds of trials or persecutions. Peter just talked about that kind of hope. The word “end” means perfectly or completely. It is a hope that is complete because of the finished work of Christ and the promises given to those who by faith, trust in Him for eternal life. It is not a hope that endures, but rather a hope that anticipates something in the future. It literally means to “set your hope perfectly or unchangeably, without doubt or despondency.” We are to set our hope on the future glorification that will occur when Christ returns. Another way to put it is to “Rest the full weight of our hopes on Jesus Christ when He is revealed.”

Our hope is fixed on “Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” (Heb. 12:2)

While we live in the here and now, our focus, our hope, is on the future to what we will receive when Christ comes and reveals Himself. Peter is once again drawing us back to consider the great inheritance that is ours when we see Christ.

When, by the gift of His infinite grace,
I am accorded in Heaven a place,
Just to be there and to look on His face,
Will through the ages be glory for me.
*O that will be glory for me,
Glory for me, glory for me,
When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory for me.*

That is our longing.
That is our hope.
It is a full and complete, unwavering hope in Jesus Christ. Warren Wiersbe says that Christians live in the future tense, with present actions and decisions governed by this future hope.

These attitudes guide us, so have a prepared mind ready for action, have self-control that keeps us focused, and have hope in what is to come when Christ returns. These are guiding attitudes. They help in guarding actions. We see that in verse 14.

II. GUARDING ACTIONS – v. 14

Peter defines the first guarding action. It is to be obedient.

A. Be Obedient – v. 14a

Note that he refers to his audience as “children”. When we trust Christ as Savior we become part of God’s family.

Romans 8:14-17

Galatians 4:4-7

With that adoption there are certain expectations. Parents have expectations of their children – obedience. Just as children inherit the nature of their parents, so as a Christian, born again into the family of God, through trusting Christ as Savior, we share in the divine nature which should compel us to act in obedience. In II Corinthians 5:17 we read that in Christ we are a new creation and that the old nature has passed away. The Holy Spirit is the change agent that gives us a divine birth. Not that we become divine ourselves, but that we are given a new nature. The old is gone, the new is come. Our desires and motives and thinking and actions should all be different than before we trusted Christ for salvation. We have a new devotion to Christ that wasn’t present before we were saved. We now have new attitudes and actions that come from partaking of God’s divine nature.

II Peter 1:3-4

One author has stated that “God has made available all that we need spiritually through our knowledge of Him.” Because we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, He empowers us to live obedient lives that resemble the character of our Father. “Because we are “partakers” of God’s nature, Christians can share in His moral victory over sin in this life and share in His glorious victory over death in eternal life. Because of the promise of the new birth, the promise of God’s protecting power, and the promise of God’s enabling power, believers can ‘participate in the divine nature,’ that is, become more like Christ.” This helps us escape the moral decay that is in the world caused by lust and instead live godly.

Romans 8:9

Romans 12:1

Galatians 2:20

I John 2:15-17

Jesus said that if we obey His commandments, our obedience is a demonstration of our love for Him. (John 14:21)

In their commentary, Walvoord and Zuck explain it this way “Obedience involves purifying oneself and practicing holy living.” Again, the topic we will discuss in verses 15-16.

How do we know what holy living is and what we are to practice? We know it by reading and hiding God’s Word in our heart, so that we might not sin. (Psalm 119:9, 11)

In Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul describes us as being at one time children of disobedience. But here Peter says we are called to be obedient children because of our relationship with Christ. Again, if we love Him we will obey His commandments. Looking back at I Peter 1:2, we see that we were chosen for “obedience to Christ.”

To paraphrase what the Prophet Samuel once told King Saul it is better to be obedient than to be religious.

What we must understand is that our obedience depends on our willingness to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us. Again it comes back to a matter of the will.

Galatians 5:16-17 “So I say, live (walk) by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want,” taking us back to verse 16 “Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

The way of my sinful desires and the way of the Holy Spirit are incompatible and yet how often do we attempt to compromise the latter in order to indulge the former.

They do not mix because they cannot mix.

Unaltered, unquestioning, unhesitatingly willing obedience is a characteristic of every true Christian. John 8:31-32

John 14:15, 21

John 15:10

Romans 6:17

I John 5:2-3

Some of you may recall this simple song learned in Sunday school as a child.

Obedience is the very best way,
to show that you believe.

Doing exactly what the Lord commands,
doing it happily.

Action is the key – do it immediately,
joy you will receive.

Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe (today).

Are you obedient?

Obedience is one guarding action. But Peter gives us a second guarding action.

B. Be a Non-conformist – v. 14b

Let me use the dictionary definition to explain what I mean. A non-conformist is a person who does not act in conformity with generally accepted beliefs and practices.

Here’s the verse: “do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.”

So by non-conformist I mean, as the verse states, someone who doesn’t conform to the evil desires of the world. You aren’t molded or fashioned by the lusts of the world.

The word “fashioned” or “conform” means to pattern after something else. In this case Peter is referring to any mannerisms, habits, dress, speech, and so on that the world says is okay.

The world believes it’s okay to lie as long as you don’t get caught.

The world believes it’s okay to cheat a little as long as you don’t get caught.

The world believes it’s okay to use foul language.

The world believes when in Rome do as the Romans do or if you buy into the advertisement, what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Go out and indulge yourself, it’s okay, you deserve to let your hair down once in a while. Everyone’s doing it!

You may recall that little wooden boy Pinocchio. Honest John Fox and Gideon the Cat lead Pinocchio astray and eventually take him to Pleasure Island. Once there he is befriended by Lampwick who is a delinquent. Without rules or anyone to enforce the rules anything goes. Do whatever your heart desires. They are bound by a curse that turns them into donkeys and sold as slaves.

This verse says don't be like the world. It suggests that before we were saved, we used to do those things in ignorance. It means to be unaware or to be without knowledge. Simply put we did them because we didn't know any better. We aren't to pattern our lives – actions and attitudes after what the world says is okay to do. And let me just say this, just because something is legal doesn't make it moral or right.

Our culture says that abortion is legal but it isn't right.

Our culture says that it's okay to shack up before you're married or that you don't have to get married at all, you can still live together, but that doesn't make it right.

Our culture says it's okay for two men to get married or two women to get married, but that doesn't make it right.

In some cultures it's illegal to convert to Christianity or to distribute Christian literature or to hold worship services, but that doesn't make it right.

We aren't to pattern our actions on the culture. There is a higher standard that we are to obey. Peter said to the religious leaders who warned them not to preach the name of Jesus anymore "we must obey God rather than men." (Acts 6:29)

Paul put it this way in Romans 12:2 "Don't be conformed to the world, instead be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

From the Living Bible we read "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." The world wants us to conform to its standards. They claim that our system of beliefs is archaic and that we should adapt to and adopt new cultural norms and practices, to compromise a bit on our outdated beliefs. And we find that churches are capitulating

to the culture and surrendering once strongly held beliefs all for the sake of fitting in, of being all-inclusive.

There's a line in the recent movie *God's Not Dead* that is important for us to note:

"I would rather stand with God and be judged by the world, than stand with the world and be judged by God."

"Don't conform to evil desires."

"Don't be conformed to this world."

Jesus said we cannot serve two masters.

Next week we are going to dig a little deeper and consider the command that Peter lays out there for us for godly living. It is the answer for how not to conform to evil desires. We find it in verses 15-16. For that you will have to come back.

But in closing today let me ask you two simple questions.

What guides your attitudes?

What guards your actions?

Evaluate your life and ask yourself if you are allowing the world to squeeze you into its mold.