



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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1 Peter 1:13 "Therefore, gird 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."

The writings of Peter take on a serious tone. They needed to be because it was serious times. Fiery trials and current suffering are constant reminders in the Peter's books. Tough times involve a resolute heart and mind. Sometimes we try to keep things light to keep our minds off of how serious things are. We see that as a patient is awaiting surgery. The family in the pre-op tells funny stories of long ago, to make the time go faster and to keep away worry. We see that in the funeral home. These days it seems more smiles and laughter are found than tears and sadness.

Our verse, however was the Holy Spirit's directive concerning the serious trials facing the Christians. Three statements are found within this verse.

First, gird your mind. Prepare your mind. Get your mind where it needs to be. Sometimes parents have to do this with their children. The parents are trying to talk seriously to them and the kids are goofing off. It's time to pull it together. It's time to listen. It's time to think. The girding part sounds like someone getting dressed. They are putting on things. Our thoughts take us to putting on the full armor of God. Here, it's all about the mind. Think properly. Be ready for action. A few chapters later, Peter would say, "Be on the alert, your adversary the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion." This is not the time for trivial thinking. This is not the time for carelessness. It's like driving on a curvy road. Both hands are on the wheel. You slow down. You are careful. You have girded your mind for action. You are prepared.

One of the greatest attacks of any enemy is to catch the opponent off guard. This is a tactic of war. This is a play in sports. This is a move in chess. To catch the opponent unsuspecting and unprepared is a huge advantage. Satan loves to do the same to us. He loves to find a moment with our guard down. It may happen the most at home. At school, at work, we expect trouble. Co-workers and fellow students are always challenging and pushing the limits of our patience and tolerance. At home, we take our armor off and relax. For king David, it was a nighttime walk on the roof of his home, the palace, where he found temptation. It was not out in the fields of war fighting the Philistines. It wasn't in negotiations with other foreign leaders. It was at home. At home, Satan caught him off guard.

(OVER)

Peter's words are be ready for action. Gird your mind. Be prepared. Be thinking. Be ready. Anticipate. That's the first step.

Second, keep sober in spirit. The word 'sober' is limited in our times to being the opposite of being drunk. It brings in the idea of alcohol. The police pull over a weaving car and the first thought is, the driver is drunk. A test is preformed to determine whether drunk or sober.

However, Biblically, sober is not connected with alcohol. It carries the idea of being serious about things. Thinking clearly. Being on top of the situation. It is not a cloudy judgment, but seeing things as they are. Sober. Peter used this very word in the passage about Satan. "Be of sober spirit. Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about..." Be of sober spirit. There are times to be serious. Comedy, laughter have a place in our lives, but so does being sober or serious. Too many lack the quality of soberness in their lives. They are not serious about their spiritual condition. They want life to be a long fun journey. Fun is in. Happiness is in. Folks get married because the one makes the other happy. Once the happiness ends, the marriage ends. Funny shows. Funny You-Tube videos. Funny jokes. They are sprinkled throughout our days, but when we lack any soberness, we take things too lightly and won't heed the words of God.

Peter was telling his readers to be sober in spirit. That's a choice. That's an attitude. Being sober doesn't mean being sour. It doesn't mean being against all things. But it means to open your eyes and see consequences. It means to take God seriously. Because a person doesn't smile does not mean they are not joyous. They may be sober.

Think about our worship for a moment. Preachers use humor. We sing, "I'm happy today." We tell about funny things that happened to us. But in all of that atmosphere we must keep before us that Jesus died for our sins and that what we do is walk with the Lord in obedience. The following verse in Peter says, "As obedient children..." The frivolous, carefree heart is just a step from the careless heart. There are times for seriousness in our worship, and in our walk with the Lord. Keep sober. Keep both hands on the wheel. Keep your eyes open. Think. Why did you say that? Why did you do that? Be sober.

Third, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The hope in those dark, tough times was not in themselves. It was not in wishful thinking. It was not in some present day hero that would turn things around. Their hope, all of their hope, was completely on the grace of God. They had put all their marbles in one basket, the grace of God. Nothing else mattered. When Christ came, at His revelation, His grace would make all things right. Their hope wasn't in perfection. Their hope wasn't in their strength, their perfect attendance in worship services, or knowing the books of the Bible in order. Their hope, their future, their confidence was in the wonderful grace of God. The love of God and the generosity of God and the forgiveness of God are all bound in grace. Hoping in that would get them through. Tough times would end. Evil would be punished. The hope was not in new homes, new fields, and better days, but in the grace of God. It would be in the presence of God that all things were right. It was in the presence of God that everything would be clear and it was where they truly wanted to be.

Battle plans. A survival guideline. Principles that would make all the difference.

Gird...keep...fix-gird your minds, keep sober, fix your hope. Three things that they could do. Three things that we can do.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)