

Oct 27th 2013 1 Peter series #3 "Well Worth A Therefore" 1:13-16

Διὸ What you see on the screen is a small Greek word that makes a very strong statement. It's the first word of 1 Peter 1:13 and it means 'therefore'. It acts as a connecting word and as a directional word. Connecting this great salvation that belongs to every Christian, and which Peter has praised God for in verses 3-12, to the directions that follow.

Peter says: Because you are receiving the goal of your faith which is the salvation of your souls therefore you need to be consciously doing everyday the following—and then he starts to list them. It's a simple every day equation. If you receive an amazing gift from someone then you are not about to ignore them or offend them. You would do all you could to show them your gratitude and to do things that please them.

We have received this awesome gift of salvation from God and therefore we need to show our praise for it by living a certain way.

*When I was 11 I bought my very first bicycle. It was beautiful. Brand spanking new. Red, silver and chrome, it was a joy to behold. I picked it up from the shop with my parents and it came with a little book of pink slips. You see there was a **Therefore** attached to that bike. I was buying it on hire purchase and therefore I was required to do two paper rounds a week in order to be able to take a pink slip with the amount of money mentioned on it into that bike shop every fortnight. But that bike was so special to me that it was well worth the Therefore.*

The gift of our salvation is nothing like that bike. The benefit it gives is not just a fleeting pleasure but an eternal inheritance reserved in glory for us. It is ours freely for we could never ever purchase it, so we do not have to work hard or act in a certain way to receive it. But it still has a therefore. It's a Therefore of Praise, of Gratitude, of a life that has been changed forever by the new birth that the Spirit has given.

It's a "Therefore" that presents itself as a biblical list of ways that God wants us to live in this present world.

And the gift of salvation that we have gained from Jesus through His death for us on the cross is well worth this Therefore. Well worth the things that God through Peter asks us to do.

And the first thing on the list is TO PREPARE OUR MINDS FOR ACTION.

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed."

The Greek expression translated as 'to prepare our minds for action' actually instructs us to 'gird up the loins of our minds'; which may not make much sense for us but meant a huge amount to Peter's readers.

For in those days the guys wore long flowing garments which they tucked up into their belts when they had work to do or if they wanted to get somewhere quickly. Otherwise the garment would get in the way; slow them down; trip them up; cause them to be distracted and in-efficient. They called this act, girding up their loins.

So they understood that girding up the loins of their minds meant getting their brains up to scratch when it came to Christian things. Making sure that they learnt about their Faith so that they would always be ready to give an answer for the hope they had in Jesus. To discipline their thinking about Christ and His purposes for them, so that they took in and retained what they heard, and were not distracted or tripped up by the things of this world.

How hard are you trying to make sure that your brain is absorbing more and more information about the Faith you confess. Do you approach the Bible, a sermon, a study group like the guy who has tucked up his garment in his belt because you are determined to get out of it all you can? Or do you stroll into church with your mind on standby and so easily distracted, thinking that if you learn something—great—but if you don't, never mind? There's always next week.

Last Sunday evening we were still in Albany and Judy and I had managed to get tickets for a concert which started at 8.00 but needed us there about 40 minutes beforehand in order to get a parking spot. So we decided to go to church, which we were told started at 6.30pm, beforehand and be prepared to leave early if we had to. Well by God's grace we had been given the wrong starting time...it was actually 5.30...and by the time we arrived the preacher had already started. We were a little too embarrassed to go into the chapel because we were so late, but rather than listen in the foyer we sneaked into the cry room where we could see without being seen. Now I can assure you that I was that close to being heavily distracted. I was

thinking of the show we had to get to later on. The cry room was dark and it was hard to read my Bible. The preacher's style was rather flat and uninspiring. I felt tempted to just let it all flow over my head. But instead I chose to gird up the loins of my mind. I found the bible passage he was preaching on and began to follow it. I leaned forward to make sure I could see the preacher because it helped me to focus on what he was saying. I thought about the points he made and I re-clarified them in my head.

You know, I can tell you today what he talked about and what God said to encourage me through that sermon. That's the blessing God gives when we work hard at retaining His words in our hearts.

The second thing on the list is 'be self controlled'.

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed."

The Greek word actually means to be sober but in this context it conveys the meaning of being vigilant. Being aware of your behavior, reactions, thoughts, because as a believer—as someone who has received this incredible gift of salvation—you don't want to disappoint God, the Giver of your new life by acting in a way that doesn't respect the name of Christ that you bear.

I heard of a minister who had a name for losing his temper at church meetings. He would shout down people who dared to disagree with him and yell at them in a most un-Christian way. He had been known to storm out of church meetings and even threaten members of his flock. Indeed his obvious lack of self-control was an embarrassment, but much more than that, it was contrary to the new birth that God had given Him and a rejection of this THEREFORE that his salvation was well worth.

Self control is depending upon the power of God's Spirit to enable you to be calm when every part of you wants to react in anger. To refuse to give into the temptation to be nasty, unkind, unhelpful, lazy, unreasonable, greedy, rude, and so on and so on.....simply because you as a Christian have received a glorious salvation. A new birth. An inheritance in heaven. And therefore you have this responsibility to live a self-controlled life that honours the Lord who is at work in you.

Self control is never easy. I heard the other day that to take a large block of chocolate and to break it into several pieces takes strength. But to then eat just one of those pieces takes self control.

Last Sunday Aaron shared his testimony and how he had become a Christian while in prison. And how, as a very new Christian he had gone before the parole board really expecting his parole to be approved. But it was rejected. And he was extremely disappointed. And his initial and natural inclination was to do what he would have done as a non-Christian and to let that disappointment and anger flow out of him in uncontrolled rage. But he knew that he needed to trust God and to exercise self-control. And it was only later on that he realized that the other prisoners were watching him to see how he would react and it was his self control at that time and his acceptance of this as part of God's plan, that convinced them that his Christianity was real.

Because part of the fruit of the Spirit is self control we have no excuse for not seeking after it in every area of our lives.

The third directive in this verse is: **To set our hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.**

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Peter is urging these Christians who were suffering for their Faith. Whose living conditions were pretty hard. To fully focus on the ultimate plan that God had for their lives.

They were already experiencing the benefit of God's goodness to them in Christ Jesus. They knew God's grace for it was the only thing that kept them going. The inner sense of God's love for them. The way they could constantly turn to Him in prayer and sense His presence alongside them. But at times they must have wondered where God was for them in their distress and hardship.

Remember, says Peter, that God has a Grace prepared for you when His Son returns that is billions of times better than the wonderful grace that you are receiving now. God's awesome purpose for your life is not for this existence

alone, it is for all eternity. And it's beyond human description. Keep your focus on that.

What God gives us in this life is wonderful grace, but because we still live in a sin affected world and a sin affected body, life can still have its down times even for Christians.

When Christ returns all God's Grace will be revealed to His people and what a mind-blowing day that will be. That's the future that we need to set our hope on as our priority. Other earthly things are important but this is assured and is more vital for us than anything else. That's why living our Christian life needs to take precedence over other stuff, and keeping our eyes on the coming of Jesus is part of the THEREFORE of our great salvation.

Therefore gird up of your minds....Be self controlled....and fix your focus on the Grace to come. For your salvation is well worth the effort needed to follow these instructions.