

1 Peter 1:13 - A Seasonable Exhortation

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1 Peter 1:13 A SEASONABLE EXHORTATION

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE

“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.” — 1 Peter 1:13

To read the whole chapter is most helpful to the understanding of our text. If we have studied it carefully we must have said to ourselves, “How full of their Lord were the minds of these holy writers!” Peter can scarcely write a verse without an allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not only “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” but you can see that his heart was steeped and saturated in memories of his Master: he could hardly get through a sentence without some allusion to the death, the resurrection, or the second coming of his beloved Lord. Oh that my ministry might always be of the same sort, dripping with the holy unction of the Savior’s name! Brethren, may your conversations and your lives be full of the Lord Jesus Christ, that men may take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus and have learned of him.

A second thought will have occurred to you: How ardently these men expected the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! Peter was continually speaking of it; and so was his beloved brother Paul. They hoped that Christ might come while they were yet alive: they evidently looked upon his advent as very near. They were not mistaken in this last belief. It is very near. A long time has passed, say you? I answer, By no manner of means: two thousand years is not a long time in the count of God, nor in reference to so grand a business. If a thousand years be with God as one day, if the Lord does not come for the next twenty thousand years, we shall not be able truthfully to say that he delayeth his coming; for with a history, of which the chief fact is the death of Christ, there may well be due pause and ample verge for working out its infinite problems. We are dealing with eternal things, and what are ages? Let us patiently wait. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness;” let us persevere in the same belief which filled the minds of the early believers, that Jesus will come, that he may come at any time, and that he will surely come quickly. Brethren, ere the word which now proceeds from my lips shall have reached your ear the Lord may come in his glory. Be ye as men that look for his coming at any moment.

It is equally noticeable that while apostolic men looked for the coming of Christ, they looked for it with no idea of dread, but, on the contrary, with the utmost joy. In this chapter, Peter sets forth the glorious advent of our Lord as an event to be hoped for with eagerness. He speaks of “the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” It was to him, therefore, not a day of terror, and of thunders, and of overwhelming confusion; but a day or the consummation of the work of grace, a period in which glory should crown the grace received through the first manifestation of the Lord. It was all joy to the early believers to think of the Lord’s appearing. The falling stars, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, the quivering earth, the skies rolled up like an outworn vesture — all these things had no horror for them since Jesus was thus coming. Though all creation should be on a blaze, and the elements should melt with fervent heat, yet Jesus was coming, and that was enough for them: the Bridegroom of their souls was on his way, and this was rapture to their expectant spirits.

Observe also, once more: How constantly they were urging this as a motive! Peter never holds it out as a mere matter of speculation, nor exclusively as a ground of comfort; but he is constantly using the Lord’s glorious appearing as the grand motive for action, for holiness, for watchfulness. Our text is a case in point: “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.” My brethren, let us not set aside a truth which

is evidently meant for our stimulus, our strength, and our sanctification; but let us receive it into our hearts, and pray that God may bless it to our practical profiting in all time to come.

I intend to handle the text with special view to the present time. It seems to me that there never was text more appropriate for any day than this one for the time now passing. It begins, as you notice, with **girding up the loins of your mind**. These are days of great looseness; everywhere I see great laxity of doctrinal belief, and gross carelessness in religious practice. Christian people are doing to-day what their forefathers would have loathed. Multitudes of professors are but very little different from worldlings. Men's religion seems to hang loosely about them, as if it did not fit them: the wonder is that it does not drop off from them. Men are so little braced up as to conscientious conviction and vigorous resolve, that they easily go to pieces if assailed by error or temptation. The teaching necessary for to-day is this: **"Gird up the loins of your mind,"** brace yourselves up; pull yourselves together; be firm, compact, consistent, determined. Do not be like quicksilver, which keeps on dissolving and running into fractions; do not fritter away life upon trifles, but live to purpose, with undivided heart, and decided resolution.

These are equally days in which it is necessary to say "be sober." We are always having some new fad or another brought out to infatuate the unstable. Very good but very weak-minded people are apt to make marvellous discoveries, and to cry them up as if they had found the philosopher's stone. In my short time I have heard, "Lo here!" and I have listened; and "Lo there!" and I have listened: the call has come from a third, fourth, fifth, sixth quarter in quick succession, and after all there was nothing worth a thought. The whole world had been going to be enlightened by some new light which Peter and Paul never saw, something far superior to anything known by any of the saints or sages of the church: but the grand illumination has not yet come off. "Be sober;" keep your feet; possess your souls; do not be carried away with every wind of doctrine; do not be little babies, to believe everything that is told you, whether it be a ghost story or a fairy tale. Be sober: quit yourselves like men that have their wits about them. A very necessary word this in times when everybody seems excited; and some are so bewildered that they do not know their head from their heels. Crowds are prepared to follow any kind of foolery, whatever it may be, as long as it is advocated by clever men, and is made to tickle their fancy. Do but shout loudly enough, and many will answer: do but set open the door and beckon, and they will rush in, whatever the entertainment may be. Brethren, "be sober," and judge for yourselves.

Nor is the third exhortation at all unnecessary: "Hope to the end." Certain of us have to confess that the outlook appears to us very dark and dismal. Our surroundings seem full of fear; and we are apt to grow despondent, if not almost despairing: wisely, then, doth bold Peter say to us, "Hope to the end." You who love the truth, do not despair of its success; you who hold to the good old ways, do not dream that everybody will desert them; do not give way to distrust as to the issues of the conflict. Be so hopeful as to be "calm mid the bewildering cry, confident of victory."

Put these three exhortations into one: pull yourselves together, be steady, and be hopeful. There you have the practical run of the text. I desire earnestly that, by God's Spirit, we may carry it into practice henceforth and ever.

In asking your attention to the text, I notice, first, an argument — "Wherefore" secondly, an exhortation — "gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end;" and thirdly, an expectation — "hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I. An Argument

I . First, then, here is An Argument , indicated by "wherefore." True religion is not unreasonable: it is common sense set to heavenly music. Albeit that true religion may be above reason, it is never contrary to reason; but if we had the reason of God, our reason would teach us what his Holy Spirit has revealed. Pure religion is pure truth: God help us to be sure of this! Holiness is also a direct logical inference from revelation.

I like to notice the epistles with their **"therefore's"** and **"wherefores."** If you read the First Epistle of Peter, you have in this verse "wherefore;" and in the eighteenth verse "forasmuch;" and in the twenty-second verse "seeing then." The second chapter begins with "wherefore;" the sixth verse has its "wherefore;" the seventh its "therefore;" and the rest of the chapter is studded with the argumentative word "for." Peter might seem to be too impetuous to be argumentative; but it is clear that to him godliness was a matter of argument, that he saw a distinct connection between the doctrine of grace and a holy life. Here in our text he saith, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind."

Will you kindly follow me while I run over his argument? I shall have to give you only an outline of it. Here it is.

He begins by saying, "Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." See, brethren, you are elected to a very high privilege; you are chosen of God from before the foundation of the world, out of his free favor, that you should be a sanctified, obedient, and cleansed people; wherefore, since God has chosen you to this, do not give way to the world, but gird up your loins to contend with it; be not carried away with every novelty, be sober; do not be downcast and dispirited, but bravely hope. Shall the elect of God be timorous? Shall those who

are chosen of the Most High give way to despair? God forbid! There is an argument, then, in the first and second verses, forcibly supporting the precepts of the text. If we had time to elaborate it, we should see that it well behooves the elect of God to choose his service resolutely, to abide in it steadfastly, and hope for its reward with supreme confidence.

But next, Peter declares that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” O ye begotten of God, see that ye live as such! You are twice-born men; live not the low life of the merely natural man. You are of the blood royal, you are descended from the King of kings; degrade not your descent! You are born, not to death, as you were at your first birth, but unto life. Though you pass through the grave, you shall not remain there. The charnel-house is no home for your body; you shall come up out of the grave, for you are begotten again unto a hope most full of life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Wherefore, gird up your loins. If it be so that there is this new life in you, a life eternal as the life of God, then be not cast down; pull your girdle close about you; keep yourself free from the oppressive cares and temptations of the world; and stand with holy hope, expecting the coming of your Lord from heaven. That is a good argument, is it not? Your election and your regeneration call you to holy living.

Further, the apostle goes on to say that you are heirs of “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” For you the harp of gold; for you the starry crown, the endless victory, the sight of the king in his beauty. For you the sitting upon the throne of Jesus, even as he has overcome, and has sat down with his Father upon his throne. Courage, then, brethren, if this be your destiny: if within a month you may be in heaven; if within a brief period you shall be exalted to share the rest of your Redeemer, do not be cast down, nor overwhelmed with trouble, nor dismayed by the boundings of sin, nor even by your own personal temptations. “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end;” for your end must be glorious! Good argument, is it not?

Then he goes on to say that you are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” God himself surrounds you as with a wall of fire. Until omnipotence can be vanquished, until immutability can be changed, until the immortal God can die, not one of his chosen people shall be destroyed. “Kept by the power of God,” what power can destroy us? Wherefore, brethren, be brave and confident. Shall such a man as I flee? Kept by the power of God, shall I tremble? If the power of God keeps me, shall I “reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man?” If the power of God keeps me, shall I be hopeless? Shall I speak like one that has no hereafter to rejoice in? It cannot be so: if God doth keep us we will keep our hope even to the end. Is not that a good argument?

Further, the apostle goes on to say that we may be passing through needful trial, but it is only for a little while. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 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 honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” See, beloved, the apostle declares that you must be tried even as gold must be put into the furnace: you have faith, and faith must be tested; it is according to its nature and divine purpose. The faith of Abraham was sharply tried, and so must the faith of all believers be. That your religion may be really solid metal, and not an imitation of it, or a mere gilded bauble, you must be tried. Your Master was tried: not without fighting did he win his crown; not without labor did he enter into his reward. There is a needs-be for our present affliction. God hath a design in it — that he may have praise and glory and honor at the appearing of his dear Son; a praise, and glory, and honor in which we shall share. Come, then, brethren, if this fire is to be passed through, let us gird up our loins to dash through it. Let us not fear, for the Lord hath said, “When thou passest through the fire I will be with thee, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” My brethren, if for a little time we must be tried, let us set our faces like flints to bear the trial. Let us not be intoxicated with sorrow or fear. Since God hath a grand design in it, let us bow ourselves to his divine will, and only ask that his holy design may be fully answered. Let us hope to be sustained in the trial, and sanctified as the result of it, and let no unbelieving fear cast a cloud over our sky. Is not this good argument?

Nor is this all. He tells us that even while we are in trial we are still full of joy. Read the eighth verse concerning “Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Beloved, we who love the Lord have our joy even in our present adversity. We have two heavens; a heaven here and a heaven hereafter. Jesus is with us, and this is heaven: we are soon to be with Jesus, and that is another heaven. Though sometimes cast down, we are glad at heart.

***I would not change my blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great.***

Give me but the company of the sweet Lord Jesus, and I ask no greater felicity. Yes, let me go back to my bed and my pain if I may have Jesus there. Better to lie in a dungeon, and pine on bread and water with Christ’s company, than to sit in a parliament of kings, and be yourself their emperor and be without the Lord. Saints find everything in Christ when they have nothing else; and they equally find everything in him when earthly comforts are multiplied. Beloved, if it be so, then let us gird up the loins of our mind, and be sober, and hope to the end. He that is with us now and makes all our sorrows work for good will be with us even to the end.

Come life, come death, our Lord's presence provides us with an all-sufficiency. If his presence shall go with us, and he will give us peace, we need not stipulate as to the road. Wherefore let us not be dismayed, nor even think of doubting. Is not this good argument?

Once more: the apostle goes on to say that the gospel which we believe, and which we teach, and for which we are ready to suffer, and even to die, is a gospel that comes to us with the sanction of the prophets. The Holy Ghost moved upon those choice spirits, so that they spoke to us concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow. It seems to me, brethren, that with such men as Moses and David, Isaiah and Jeremiah, to support our faith, we need not be ashamed of our company, nor tremble at the criticisms of the moderns. We ought rather to gird up the loins of our mind, and give our whole soul to the proclamation of a gospel which is rendered venerable by the testimony of inspired men of all ages. Be sober and steadfast in the belief of the old faith; never be moved by anything that modern rationalism or ancient unbelief may have to say. For not only do the prophets assure us that we follow no cunningly-devised fable, but the angels stand gazing into it with strong desire to know more of it. The daily study of cherubim and seraphim is the revelation of God in Christ. I tell you, sirs, that the gospel which to-day is hacked in pieces by the wise men of this world, who tell us that they have found out something more in harmony with growing enlightenment, is still the admiration of every holy one who walks yon golden streets, or waits before the burning throne. Still do angels and principalities and powers admire the mystery of the Incarnate God, and the substitutionary atonement made for men by the crucified Lord. They never cease to wonder and adore concerning the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Standing, then, side by side with prophets, looking with intent gaze to the same object which fixes the attention of angels, we are not abashed by ridicule, nor disquieted by opposition. We stand fast, as upon a rock, girding up the loins of our mind, and hoping to the end. There again is right good argument. Is it not so?

II. The Exhortation

II. I beg you, dear friends, to follow me to the next head of discourse, namely, The Exhortation. The exhortation is a triplet: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end."

The first exhortation, "Gird up the loins of your mind," sounds very sweetly in my ears. I do not know whether it raises in your minds echoes, as it does in mine. I fancy that Peter had a noticeable habit of pulling his garments together. I read of him that he "girt his fisher's coat unto him, for he was stripped." Almost every body has some personal peculiarity and mannerism; and it may have been the way of Peter to be often tightening his girdle. Hence the Savior — and here is the music of the text to me — said to him by the sea, after he had said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" — "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." That word "gird," while it had something to do with Peter's old habit, is now sanctified by that blessed word which his Master had given him. Turning to the Lord's people, whom he desires to feed, he says to them, "Gird up the loins of your mind." My Master talked of my girding my loins, and of my being girt. I say now to you, Gird up the loins of your mind. Do you not think he borrowed the expression from the Lord Jesus? I think he did.

Moreover, he was writing to Hebrew strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. May he not have had ringing in his ears for these Hebrews the words of Moses to their fathers when they were strangers in Egypt? They were to eat the Passover with their loins girded and their staves in their hands. Thus would Peter have his brother "strangers" live in expectation of their complete deliverance and home-going, which was drawing near. I detect an echo of Egypt and the Paschal supper in this word.

Or did Peter wish them to be ready to rejoice in the great blessing which was soon to come to them? Were they to be ready to leap and run for joy? We read of Elias, that when he heard the sound of an abundance of rain, he girded himself and ran before Ahab's chariot; and so when we hear of the grace that is to be revealed at the coming of our Lord, we are ready to run without weariness and walk without fainting. Oh that every servant of God would gird up his loins to run and meet his Master's chariot; for the King is on his way! He cometh! He cometh! Go ye forth to meet him. Meeting him, it is but fit that ye should be found as servants prepared to do his bidding and run on his errands.

The exact meaning of the metaphor, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind," is to be found in the form of oriental dress, which requires the use of a girdle, and the girding of it tightly, lest the garments should entangle the feet of the traveler, or otherwise hinder his action.

"Gird up the loins of your mind." My brethren, that certainly teaches us, in the first place, earnestness. A man going to work tucks up his sleeves, and tightens his robes. He has something to do which demands all his strength, and, therefore, he cannot afford to have anything hanging loosely about him, to hinder him. We brace ourselves for a supreme effort: and the Christian life is always such. We must always be in earnest if we would be disciples of our earnest Lord.

Does it not also mean preparedness? When a man has girt his garments about him, he is ready for his work. A true believer should be ready for suffering or service — ready, indeed, for anything. A servant standing with his loins girt signifies that whatever the message may be from his Master, he is ready to deliver it; whatever the errand, he is ready to run upon it. He only needs the word, and he will not hesitate, but will obey at once. This is the position which Christian people should always occupy; you should be earnestly prepared for the will of the Lord, let it be what it may. The future is to you unknown, but you are in a fit condition to meet it, whatever form it may assume.

But the figure means more than this: does it not? It means determination, and hearty resolution. The man who girds himself up for a work means that he is resolved to do it at once. He has made up his mind; no shilly-shallying remains with him, no hesitancy, no questioning, no holding back: he is set upon his course and is not to be moved from it. You will never get to heaven, any of you, by playing at religion. There will be no climbing the hill of the Lord without effort; no going to glory without the violence of faith. I believe that the ascent to heaven is still as Bunyan described it — a staircase, every step of which will have to be fought for. He heard sweet singers on the roof of the palace, singing,

***“Come in! come in!
Eternal glory thou shalt win.”***

Many had a mind to enter the palace and win that eternal glory; but then at the doorway stood a band of warlike men, with drawn swords, to wound and kill every man that ventured to enter. Therefore many who would have liked to have walked on the top of the palace did not care for so dangerous an enterprise: they desired the end but not the way to it. At last there came one with a determined countenance, and he said to the writer with the inkhorn by his side, “Set down my name, sir,” and when his name was duly recorded, he drew his sword and rushed upon the armed men with all his might. It was a fierce conflict, but he meant to conquer or die, and he did conquer; he cut a lane through his enemies, and by-and-by he, too, was heard singing with the rest,

***“Come in! come in!
Eternal glory thou shalt win.”***

By conflict throughout a whole life we come to our rest; and there is no other way. You cannot go round to a back-door, and enter into heaven by stealth. You must fight if you would reign. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind.

Once more, the figure teaches us that our life must be concentrated. **“Gird up the loins of your mind.”** We have no strength to spare; we cannot afford to let part of our force leak away. We need to bring all our faculties to bear upon one point, and exert them all to one end. Much can be done by concentration. The rays of the sun are warm; but if you collect them into a focus, by a burning-glass, you produce a fire which else you could not find in them. Concentrate your faculties upon faith in Jesus! Concentrate your emotions upon the love of Jesus! Concentrate your whole being upon the glory of Jesus! You will accomplish marvels if you do this. A man who is all over the place is nowhere; but he whose life is one and indivisible is strong, and his influence will be felt in the service of his Master.

I cannot stay long upon one point, though there is so much to be said. The second exhortation is — **“Be sober.”** And does not that mean, first, moderation in all things? Do not be so excited with joy as to become childish. Do not grow intoxicated and delirious with worldly gain or honor. On the other hand, do not be too much depressed with passing troubles. There are some who are so far from sobriety that, if a little goes wrong with them, they are ready to cry, “Let me die.” No, no

“Be sober.” Keep the middle way: hold to the golden mean. There are many persons to whom this exhortation is most needful. Are there not men around us who blow hot to-day and cold to-morrow? — their heat is torrid, their cold arctic. You would think they were angels from the way they talk one day; but you might think them angels of another sort from the manner in which they act at other times. They are so high up, or so low down, that in each case they are extreme. Today they are carried away with this, and the next carried away with that. I knew a Christian man right well to whom I was accustomed to use one salutation whenever I saw him. He was a good man, but changeable. I said to him, “Good morning, friend! what are you now?” He was once a valiant Arminian, setting young people right as to the errors of my Calvinistic teaching. A short time after, he became exceedingly Calvinistic himself, and wanted to screw me up several degrees; but I declined to yield. Anon he became a Baptist, and agreed with me on all points, so far as I know. This was not good enough, and therefore he became a Plymouth Brother; and after that he went to the Church from which he originally set out. When I next met him I said, “Good morning, brother, what are you now?” He replied, “That is too bad, Mr. Spurgeon; you asked me the same question last time.” I replied, “Did I? But what are you now? Will the same answer do?” I knew it would not. I would earnestly say to all such brethren, **“Be sober. Be sober.”** It cannot be wise to stagger all over the road in this fashion. Make sure of your footing when you stand; make doubly sure of it before you shift.

To **be sober** means to have a calm, clear head, to judge things after the rule of right, and not according to the rule of mob. Be not influenced by those who cry loudest in the street, or by those who beat the biggest drum. Judge for yourselves as men of understanding. Judge as in the sight of God with calm deliberation.

“Be sober,” that is, be clear-headed. The man who drinks, and thus destroys the sobriety of his body, is befogged, and muddled, and has lost his way. Ceasing to be sober, he makes a fool of himself. Do not commit this sin spiritually. Be specially clear-headed and calm as to the things of God. Ask that the grace of God may so rule in your heart that you may be peaceful and serene, and not troubled with idle fear on one side or with foolish hope on the other.

“Be sober,” says the apostle. You know the word translated **“be sober”** sometimes means “be watchful;” and indeed there is a great kinship between the two things. Live with your eyes open; do not go about the world half asleep. Many Christians are asleep. Whole congregations are asleep. The minister snores theology, and the people in the pews nod in chorus. Much sacred work is done in a sleepy style. You can have a Sunday-school, and teachers and children can be asleep. You can have a tract-distributing society, with visitors going round to the doors all asleep; you can do everything in a dreamy way if so it pleases you. But says the apostle, — be watchful, be alive; brethren, look alive; be so awakened up by these grand arguments with which we have plied you already, that you shall brace yourselves up, and throw your whole strength into the service of your Lord and Master.

Finally, let us **“hope to the end.”** Never despair; never even doubt. Hope when things look hopeless. A sick and suffering brother rebuked me the other day for being cast down. He said to me, “We ought never to show the white feather; but I think you do sometimes.” I asked him what he meant, and he replied, “You sometimes seem to grow desponding and low. Now I am near to die, but I have no clouds and no fears.” I rejoiced to see him so joyous and I answered, “That is right, my brother, blame me as much as you please for my unbelief, I richly deserve it.” “Why,” he said, “you are the father of many of us. Did you not bring me and my friend over yonder to Christ? If you get low in spirit after so much blessing, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.” I could say no other than, “I am ashamed of myself, and I desire to be more confident in the future.” Brethren, we must hope, and not fear. Be strong in holy confidence in God’s word, and be sure that his cause will live and prosper. Hope, says the apostle; hope to the end; go right through with it; if the worst comes to the worst, hope still. Hope as much as ever a man can hope; for when your hope is in God you cannot hope too much.

But let your hope be all in grace. Do not hope in yourself or in your works; but “hope in the grace;” for so the text may be read. Hope, moreover, in the grace which you have not yet received, in “the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Bless God for the grace that you have not yet obtained, for he has it in store for you; yea, he has put it on the road, and it is coming to you. When for the moment you seem to be slack in present grace, say, “Glory to God for all the grace I have not tasted yet.” Hope for the grace which is to come with your coming Lord.

III. Expectation

III. This has brought me to my last head, in which there is much of sweetness. I ask your patience while I dwell upon it. The third point is Expectation:

“Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

What you have got to hope for, brethren, is more grace. God will always give you grace. He will never deal with you upon the ground of merit; that door is shut: he has begun with you in grace, and he will go on with you in grace, therefore “hope to the end for the grace.”

Next, it is grace that is on the way to you. The Greek should be rendered, “Hope to the end for the grace that is being brought to you,” or, “the grace that is a-bringing to you.” Grace is coming to you with all speed. Jesus Christ is coming; he is on the way to earth: look for him soon to appear.

The grace you are to look for is grace linked with your Lord Jesus Christ: you never did receive any grace apart from him, and you never will.

The grace you are to hope for is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. He has been revealed once, at his first advent; hence the grace you have. He is to be revealed very soon in his second advent; hence the grace that is a-coming to you. Think of the grace that is a-coming. “My ship is coming home,” says the child. So also is mine: Jesus is coming, and that means all things to me. The golden chariot of my Lord is a-coming loaded down with unutterable love, and infinite joy, and eternal delight. Rejoice this morning for the grace that is a-coming, grace that is linked with Jesus Christ.

But what can this grace be that will be received at his coming? Justification? No; we have that already, by his resurrection. Sanctification? No; we have that already, by being made partakers of his life. What is the grace that is to be revealed at his coming? Just look at the chapter, and you will read in the fifth verse, “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” Perfect salvation is one part of the grace which is to be brought in the last time when Christ comes. When he comes there will be perfection for our souls and salvation for our bodies. Peradventure, we may be alive when he comes: if so, we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye into perfection; for “this corruption must put on

incorruption.” Peradventure, we may die before he comes; if so, it does not matter: though corruption, earth, and worms may have devoured this flesh, yet at his coming our body shall rise in the image of Christ’s glorious body. We look for perfect salvation at the coming of Christ. This is the grace that is a-bringing to us, and is on the road now.

And that is not all. The second grace that Christ will bring with him when he comes is the perfect vindication of our faith: “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 honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” To-day they sneer at our faith, but they will not do so when Jesus comes; to-day we ourselves tremble for the ark of the Lord, but we shall not do so when he comes. The coming of Christ in all the glory of the Father will be a vindication of our faith. Then shall all men say that believers were wise, prudent, philosophical. Those who believe in Jesus may be called fools to-day, but men will think otherwise when they see them shine forth as the sun in the Father’s kingdom. Wait a wee bit: all will be cleared soon. Copernicus declared the truth that the earth and the planets revolve around the sun. His opponents replied that this could not be true, for if the planet Venus revolved around the sun, she must present the same phases as the moon. This was very true. Copernicus looked up to Venus, but he could not see those phases, nor could any one else, nevertheless he stuck to his statement, and said, “I have no reply to give, but in due time God will be so good that an answer will be found.” Copernicus died, and his teaching had not yet been justified; but soon after Galileo came forward with his telescope, and on looking at Venus he saw that she did pass through exactly the same changes as the moon. Thus wisdom is justified of her children. Truth may not prevail to-day or to-morrow, but her ultimate victory is sure. To-day they say that the doctrines of grace are antiquated, obsolete, and even injurious. We are at no trouble to answer the charge. We can wait, and we do not doubt that public thought will alter its tone. I hear the sneering word, “You orthodox are fools, for you hold to exploded notions.” Truly, sir, we do believe that which you please to say is exploded; but we shall be found to be right when your new systems have come and gone, like vapors which appear for a little time, and then vanish away. He is coming who will justify all who believe in him, and award praise, and glory, and honor to their faith. If our gospel be a lie, it will prove to be a lie at his coming; but it is so true that we are not troubled at the prospect of the last great judgment. The mysteries which now perplex us will be solved when the mists are rolled away. Wherefore hope on for the grace that is to be revealed.

Once more: when Christ comes there will be a revelation of perfect glory. Read the eleventh verse: “Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Now this is the grace which is to come to us when Christ appears. “Grace!” say you, “You mean glory.” I do. Yet what is glory but grace come to perfection? Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the full flower. You believe in Jesus Christ, but as yet you do not see the glory that awaits you. Wait a little while. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

I have brought you back to the second coming of Christ. I told you it was a practical doctrine. I want to leave that impression upon your minds, that you may go back to your daily work and constant struggle with the world. “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end,” — because there is wondrous grace to be revealed to you by and-by. I should like you to act as an American — Colonel Davenport — did upon a certain occasion. One day, many years back, a thick darkness came over the United States. Now and then in London we have dreadfully dark days for which we can scarcely account, but this was quite a new experience for the New Englanders, and caused a terrible sensation. So exceedingly black was it that the barn-door fowls wells to roost in the middle of the day. The darkness grew worse, and people trembled in their houses, declaring that the end of the world was coming. They were all excited and alarmed. One of the houses of legislature adjourned under the belief that the Day of Judgment was come. The other house was Sitting, and the blackness was so intense that everybody was awed. A motion was made that they should break up, as the end of the world had certainly arrived. Colonel Davenport objected, saying, “The Judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjourning; and if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish, therefore, that candles may be brought.” Brethren, it is dark; but whatever is going to happen, or whatever is not going to happen, let us be found girded, sober, and hopeful. In these dark political times, these dark religious times, I call for candles; for we mean to go on working. Amen.

GIRDED FOR THE WORK. WORK

BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 18TH, 1882.

“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.” — 1 Peter 1:13

WE noticed, in reading the chapter from which our text is taken, that the apostle Peter first mentioned the glorious doctrines of grace, and the marvellous benefits bestowed by God upon believers, and he afterwards drew from them a practical inference. "Wherefore," said he, "gird up the loins of your mind." Doctrine may become dangerous if it be not reduced to practice, and all the doctrines of God's Word may readily be turned to good and practical account if we are willing so to employ them. Those who regard doctrine simply as a subject for debate, an opportunity for displaying one's argumentative powers, miss the mark altogether, for we are taught the truth in order that it may lead us to holiness of life. This is the object of God in giving us more light,— that, by that light, we may ourselves become more full of light, and be the means of conveying light to others. Therefore, when your mind is instructed concerning some grand truth, after you have sucked the honey and joy out of it, always say to yourself, "But what are the bearings of this doctrine upon my life? How should it influence me? What would God have me to do as the result of receiving such teaching as this?" From what Peter had already said, like a true logician, he draws a wise inference, and says, "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 shall only have time to consider the first few words of the apostle's exhortation, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind;" and, concerning them, we will ask three questions, First, What are we to do? Secondly, Why are we to do it? And, thirdly, How are we to do it?

I. First, let us enquire, What Are We To Do? "Gird up the loins of your mind."

The metaphor used by Peter is a very simple one. The garments of the Easterns, as you know, are not like ours, but are long flowing robes; and, unless the raiment is well gird about the wearer, there is little or nothing that he can do in the way of active exercise. In a spiritual sense, the injunction, "Gird up the loins of your mind," is a, very proper one to be addressed to those of us who have various loose and flowing things which are almost as natural to us as garments are to the body. They must be girt about us very tightly, or else they will become an encumbrance and a hindrance.

We may possibly understand what is meant by our text if we, first, consider the opposite condition. Some persons are notorious for their laxity; whatever they have about them is very loosely attached to them. I am grieved to say that there are some professing Christians who are very lax even in matters of morality. It is a, great shame that it should be so with any of them; and we feel that there must be hypocrisy at the bottom of such a state of things as that. Others are very lax in their beliefs; they are ready to believe anything or nothing according to whatever is said by the last speaker to whom they have listened. Some are very lax in their observance of gospel ordinances; they act as though Christ had given them commands which they might obey or disregard, according to their own pleasure. Nothing connected with them seems to be really fastened to them so as to hold them; and, for their part, they hold nothing firmly, everything is loose, and slipping away from them. Now, I take it that the apostle exhorts all professing Christians of that character to get out of such a state of heart; and I would urge you, dear friends, to do the same. Gird up the loins of your mind as to your personal conduct; be strict about it, not lax. Never fear incurring the opprobrium of being too precise. If the name of Puritan be appended to you, accept it joyfully as a badge of honor, and wish that you were more of a Puritan than your assailants suspect. Whoever else is lax, do you remember that you serve a jealous God; and, therefore, be very jealous of the honor of his Word, and jealous of the observance of his commands, and jealous concerning your whole life. In this sense, "gird up the loins of your mind."

Some professors are ready enough to believe, but they have no intensity in their beliefs. They are orthodox so far as they go, but they do not go far enough. They have no great concern about religion; they are merely tattooed with Christianity, it is only skin deep with them, it never gets into their hearts or affects their souls. There are many preachers, nowadays, who hold various views of truth, but they hold nothing tenaciously. I have often wished to ask some Broad Churchmen if they did not think that the martyrs were great fools in laying down their lives in defense of the truth; for I am sure that, according to the teaching of many whom I know, they must regard those who were faithful unto death as little better than madmen. I hardly think that some of the teachers of the modern school believe that there is any truth that is worth a man's dying for. They say that something is white, but they add that white is a very, very light shade of black, if you look at it from a certain standpoint; another thing is undoubtedly black, but that is merely a somewhat darker shade of white! Here is a certain truth which they say that they believe; but there are some circumstances or conditions in which they do not believe it, so practically it is not a matter of faith to them at all. If ever you press them too closely upon any point, they always have a back way of escape open; in fact, they do not really believe anything at all with their heart and soul.

Now, when religion is held in that fashion, it is tantamount to irreligion. If I held doctrines which did not hold me, I should stammer in the declaration of them, and I could not suppose that anyone else would accept them from my halfhearted advocacy. He who has not a fixed fulcrum for his lever, whatever machinery he may have, will never move the world; and nothing will be accomplished by you, my friend, or accomplished in you, unless there are certain truths which you no more question than you question your own existence,— certain munitions of rocks behind which you make your soul's dwelling place, and find yourself at ease. "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks," and they thus prove their wisdom; and when a man, whatever his

feebleness may be, has certain rocky fundamental truths into which he tunnels so as to hide himself therein, then is he well protected. But all that looseness of which I have been speaking is a throwing away of strength. Laxity is the helper of unbelief, and tempts to all manner of evil the souls of those who are under its malign influence. Therefore, dear friends, do not be lax in your belief, but believe what you do believe; hold what you do hold; and know what you do know. Do you ask, "How can that be?" Well, by being taught of God, for God teaches infallible truth. What a man teaches himself, or learns from his fellow-men, may all have to be laid aside, for it is liable to be erroneous; but that which God the Holy Ghost burns into his heart and conscience, as with a hot iron, shall never be taken from him. You may kill him, but you will not take the truth from him; you may cut him in pieces, but the man is so joined to the truth that he cannot be separated from it. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." Get your mental straps tightened up; bind the blessed truth of the gospel more loosely to your soul than ever.

Further, this condition of mind to which Peter refers is not only the opposite of laxity and looseness; but it is also opposed to that effluence, or want of grip, want of unity, want of concentration, which runs away with the usefulness and force of so many professors. These men love God after a fashion, and hold his truth in a way; but, then, there are many other things which they love and hold quite as much. Their energies run — nay, rather I should say, trickle into a hundred channels; but there is no force in them. If they could all be made to flow in one channel, they might rush onward like a torrent, and bear everything before them; yet it is not so with them, but quite the opposite. They are all in pieces, they never get to be one entire man; the prayer of David has never been fulfilled in their experience, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." They cannot cry, with the sweet psalmist of Israel, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." And not being fixed to one point, neither are they united as one person; their condition is exactly described by the prophet Hosea, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty." It is a blessed thing for a Christian to be strapped up in one; bundle, and not to be divided into a number of separate parcels. "Set your affections on things above," is a misquotation that I have many times heard, but there is not such a text as that in the Bible. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Set your affection on things above;" that is, have all your affections bound up into one supreme, all-embracing affection, and then fix it all upon Christ. When the many men within the man become all one man, and he is, as we say, "all there," and you know that he is "all there," then has he indeed girded up the loins of his mind. May we all obey this apostolic command, and earnestly avoid the opposite!

In trying further to show what our text means, I would say that I think the short way of putting it is this, "Pull yourself together." We often say, in some great crisis or emergency, "I must, somehow or other, pull myself together." That is just the meaning of the apostle here. Do you not sometimes find yourself very listless, and languid, and limp! You hope the life of God is within you, but you almost question whether it is or not, for it is not vigorous or joyous. You do not seem to take an interest in the things of God as you once did; you say, with Cowper,—

***Thy saints are comforted, I know,
And love thy house of prayer!
I sometimes go where others go,
But find no comfort there.***

Somehow or other, you appear to have fallen to pieces, there is no cohesion about you, and you are sure that you are not in a right condition. Well, then, our text is the very message you need; as it means, first, concentrate all your powers and faculties to the service of God, and the worship of God. Let this be your song,—

***O bless the Lord, my soul!
Let all within me join,
And aid my tongue to bless his name,
Whose favors are divine.***

"Gird up the loins of your mind;" that is, let the truth of God go right round you, so that no part of you is left out of the hallowed circle; be completely contained within the girdle of pure and precious truth. Nobody knows what he can really do when he is "all there." The capacities of manhood are something terrible when they are turned into the wrong channel. Look at a man who goes insane. Insanity is, in some senses, a weakness; yet, sometimes, when a man has become insane, he has possessed the strength of five or six ordinary men. Now, if we could have just the opposite of that,— a sanity which nevertheless concentrated and increased all the powers of our entire being, what is there that we might not be able to do? This is what the apostle means when he urges us to gird up the loins of our mind.

This expression further signifies, not only concentration, but full awakening. We are not half-awake, brothers and sisters, as a rule. Sometimes we are; when God the Holy Spirit gives us the new life in all its fullness, there is within us then joy ecstatic, firmness of resolution, strength of will, a bravery of holy faith that can risk everything upon the faintest word of the unseen God. But, oftentimes, we need to cry as David did, "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake." In the 119th Psalm, how very frequently that prayer occurs, "Quicken thou me"! The psalmist was a living man, or he could not have prayed to be made alive; but, being alive,

ho wanted to be made more alive. I have told you before of a strange picture which I saw at Brussels, in which the artist has represented the resurrection in a very remarkable fashion, showing the people as partly alive. There is one man with his head restored to life, but his arms remain as skeletons. There is another alive down to his breast, but his legs and the rest of his body are still under the dominion of death. It is an extraordinary idea, yet I am afraid that there are many so-called Christians who are just like that. They have just enough life in them for the salvation of their souls, but scarcely enough to make them earnest and diligent in the cause of God. Now, brother, if it is the case with you, wake yourself up, pull yourself together, "gird up the loins of your mind."

If you do so, in addition to this concentration and arousing, there will be a holy resoluteness about you, an intensifying of any resolve that you have made to serve the Lord. Sometimes, you feel, "This is the proper time for me to draw near to God, but really I do not feel in the spirit for it." Now, pull yourself together, and determine that you will not allow any of this nonsense. We must pray; and when we feel that we cannot pray, then is the time when we must pray more earnestly than ever. We are never so much in need of prayer as when we have the least inclination to the holy exercise. I delight in preaching the gospel when I am conscious that the Lord is with me; but there are times when I have to say, "I do not feel fit for this great task." Whenever that is true of any of us, we must hear Peter saying to us, "Gird up the loins of your mind." Brother, it is the devil who wants to keep you from serving the Savior; he expects that God is going to be with you, and to bless you, so he tries to unfit you for the service. Then say, "By the grace of God, I mean to do it; and if ever in my life I poured out my very soul, it shall be now. Instead of running away from the task, I will run to it. Into the very center of the enemy will I rush, like David when he said, 'By thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.'" Oh, for that firm putting down of the foot, that steadfast determination that the duty of the hour shall be performed, and the privilege of the hour shall be enjoyed! We will not be drifted from it, or driven from it, or bribed from it. What have you and I to do with going to sleep? Those who are children of darkness may sleep in the night; but we are children of the day, the Sun of righteousness has risen upon us; so, "let us not sleep as do others," but let us gird up the loins of our mind; and, in the name of the Most High God, let us resolve not to be found halfhearted and lukewarm, but to be wide awake and all-alive in the service of our Lord.

Still further to explain our text, let me say, that it must also mean, "Get rid of hindrances." The Oriental girds up his loins that he may not be tripped up by his long flowing garments; and this is the kind of thing that acts as a hindrance to a Christian's progress: not hindrances from Satan and the world alone, but from himself; — from things about himself that cling as much to him, and seem as necessary for him, as garments are for our bodies. These things will often get in the way, and trip us up when we are running, or hinder us when we are walking.

When does this happens. Sometimes, there creeps over the mind of the believer the thought of security, and consequently, of there being little need of watchfulness. True security there is in Christ, and that sets the mind on its watch-tower; but there is a false security, in which Satan says, "All is well with you. You are not like these young people who have lately joined the church; you are an old experienced Christian, so there is no fear of your falling into temptation. You are an old fox, you cannot be caught in the traps of which they will have to beware. You may go a great deal further than those young people may, and do a great many things which would be dangerous for them, for you are all right." If you are deceived by the tempter, you sit down, and say to yourself, "My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved." You fold your hands, and smile with a delusive happiness — under the notion that all must go well with you. O dear friends, there is nothing that will lead to stumbling and falling sooner than this fancied security! This is indeed having loose garments. You have special need to watch and pray. Always be afraid of that experience which Satan tells you exempts you from the necessity of being on your guard, for you are in an enemy's country, and there is a foe lurking behind every bush, and he alone is safe who cries to God, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." But they who are carnally secure are in the very midst of danger. Let us not get into that lax and loose condition, but let us gird up the loins of our mind.

Some are all ungirt, and have their garments hanging loosely about them, so that they are unable to do anything electively, because they are continually perplexed with a thousand wandering thoughts. They do not think rightly about anything, because they think in a loose fashion about everything. They never act as do the bees which I have often watched. These busy little creatures find the bell of a flower, and plunge right in till you cannot see them. What are they doing? They are getting all the honey that is stored at the bottom of the flower. Meanwhile, what has the butterfly done? He has flitted lightly over half the flowers of the garden, and he laughs at the bee for wasting so much time in one flower-bell; yet, at night, the butterfly has nothing to do but to die, while the bee has been storing her house with sweet nutriment. It is a blessed thing when we get right into the bell of the flower of the gospel, and are determined to penetrate its secret places, to extract the delicious essence of the Word, that we may feed thereon and grow thereby. It is no use having a brain that is taken up with fifty different subjects, and yet does not master any one of them. There was a class of men called the Encyclopedists, who endeavored to gain universal knowledge; and, certainly, some of them were prodigious scholars; but with you and with me, beloved, it will be well to call in all these wandering thoughts, to make the Lord Jesus Christ our Encyclopedia, and to determine not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified. When you act thus, you have secured the choicest honey in all the world, while those who attempt to learn a thousand other things may really gather nothing that is worth preserving. man of one book is, after all, the man of power; and the man who has but one object in life, who lives only for Christ, and lives alone upon him, is the gracious man whom God will use for blessed ends.

Another loose garment that is likely to trip us up is too much care about the things of this world. I think that a man needs sometimes to hesitate as to whether he should enlarge his business. He may have just enough to do to keep going what he already has in hand, and he will be able to steal out to the week-night services, and to take his place in the Sunday-school; and it may be that, if he undertakes more responsibilities, he will be unable to spare any time for his Lord's service. His capital is small, though it has sufficed hitherto; but if he tries to make it serve in his larger undertakings, he will be always worrying about how he shall be able to meet his obligations, and he will be running from pillar to post with a thousand anxieties as to how he is to get over his difficulties. Is it not wonderful that people should be so anxious to get more anxieties? The path of wisdom is to try to escape them; and, especially as age increases, to feel that the last part of our life ought to be Sabbatic, it should be a period of rest. Surely, the last seventh of our lives at least should be a preparation for the everlasting Sabbath when we hope to dwell with our Lord for ever. It is well for a man when he can make it so; but too much to do, too much to think of, too much care, and too much trouble, are very apt to trip up a Christian. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." Strap yourselves up a bit. You know, riches take to themselves wings, and fly away. One of the best things you can do is to clip their wings every now and then, and send the feathers round to the College, or the Orphanage, or the Colportage Society, or some other good work. In that way you are more likely to keep what you now possess, and to have a blessing with it.

Frequently, too, men who do not gird up the loins of their minds are tripped up by mental troubles. They are troubled about this, and worried about that; things are not according to their mind; and, instead of doing their best, and then leaving the matter with God, they are constantly fretting and fuming. I know some good women who make their home utterly miserable by being always in a worry. Often, it is only about whether such-and-such a room has been dusted, or whether something has been washed. And there are plenty of husbands who go on in the same foolish way, for we are all of one race, and we are all far too anxious to borrow trouble when we have none of our own. Ay, and some are very adept at manufacturing troubles. They have a little trouble factory at the top of the house, and they like to get up there, and try to make something to be disquieted about. A trouble that God sends, he will take away; but if you make it yourself, you may take it away yourself. Homemade troubles are just like home-made clothes; they do not often fit; very well, but they last longer than any others. So I warn you against them,— the troubles, I mean; — pray put them aside. Obey Peter's injunction, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind," and let these fancied troubles go to the winds.

There are others whose loins are not girt up because they are fearful, despondent, discouraged in their work for the Lord. Have you not heard them moaning in this style? "I do not think I shall ever take my class any more." "I do not feel that I can stand up and preach at the corner of the streets again." "I do not see how I can give another tract to that man; he swore so dreadfully." Come, brother, "gird up the loins of your mind." You want to pull that strap more tightly round you, and to get your garments well secured.

I see that they are beginning to fly about in the wind; and, if you are not careful, one by one they will blow away from you. Be not discouraged; fear not; do not despair of success. The God, whom you serve, will not let his Word fall to the ground; but you shall see that, though you went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, you shall come back rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you. I need not go over all the many ways in which a Christian man's garments may impede his labors; but our text applies to them all. One other meaning of Peter's words, "Gird up the loins of your mind" is, Be ready, as a man who has his coat buttoned up is prepared to face the storm. Be ready for troubles; be ready for evil tidings; be ready for service; be ready for suffering; be ready to live; be ready to die. Take for your motto the sailors' cry, "Ready, aye, ready;" and say, "Whatever my Lord's will may be, I, his servant, with my loins girt, and my staff in my hand, am ready for it." As old Master Trapp says, "Be handy, with your loins girt about." Have your robes all well fastened so that you will not be tripped up by them. Being handy, in this sense, is also to be handsome; no man looks better than when his garments are well girt about him. When they became loose, they spoil the appearance of his figure; but when he keeps himself well prepared for his service, then is he beautiful in the sight of his master, who loves to see his servant ready for fighting, ready for journeying, ready for whatever may happen to him, or be required of him. Wherefore, then, pull yourselves together, and so "gird up the loins of your mind."

II. Now, secondly, Why Are We To Do This!

First, the fourfold character of the Christian life requires it. A Christian ought to be at least four things, as well as many others which I have not time now to mention. First, he is a pilgrim; he is on a journey: he is passing through this world to a better one. How can a man travel swiftly and safely unless his garments are properly prepared for the journey? And the pilgrims to Zion must gird up the loins of their mind if they are to reach their destination.

A Christian is, next, a racer; he is running in a race, and he wants to win the crown. He has started for the goal, and the prize of his high calling is glittering before his eyes; he is the man who must heed the command, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." How can you run with endurance the race set before you if you do not "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you"? If entanglements are to be avoided, the garments of the racer must be tightly girt about him.

Moreover, the Christian is a warrior. How can he overcome his foe if he has not put on his armor, and is not well clad for the struggle! How shall he fight while his movements are impeded by loose garments? You know what the old soldier said to the Duke

of Wellington when he was asked whether he had been at Waterloo. He said that he had, and then the Duke enquired of him, "Suppose that battle had to be fought again, how would you like to be dressed!" The man answered, "If I had to take part in that fight again, I should like to be in my shirt-sleeves." There was great common-sense in that reply, and it may teach us a useful lesson. A Christian man does not fight well for his Master unless he gets, as it were, into his shirt-sleeves, and puts off all his dignity, and everything which binds him from rendering effective service, and doing the most he can do for Christ.

Beside being a pilgrim, a runner, and a warrior, a Christian is a laborer; he is called to work in his Master's vineyard. Now, if a man does not gird up the loins of his mind, he will be a very poor laborer, and will show a very bad day's work when the sun goes down; so again I say to you, dear friends, pull yourselves together. With such holy work to do, endeavor to do it at your very best. Remember, also, the greatness of your task; that should make you "gird up the loins of your mind." The Christian life is no child's play. To bear testimony for Christ is no trifle; and if you wish to win souls, as I hope you do, brothers and sisters, you cannot do it unless your spirit is braced up to the very highest point by the grace of God. Your work is such as might have filled an angel's heart, and it did fill your Savior's hands, so see to it that it is done in the best possible style.

The next reason why you should "gird up the loins of your mind" is because of the slenderness of your strength. You have so little power that you cannot afford to waste an ounce of it. If you are ever to thresh the mountains, there must be no wasting or throwing away, even inadvertently, of any of the little force which you have. If you would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, you must look well to your spiritual strength, and never waste an atom of it.

Besides that, remember the readiness of your foes. If they can trip you up, by laying hold upon a garment which is trailing behind you, they will do so. If it be possible for you to be vanquished, you will be vanquished; for you have enemies who watch you with eyes full of venom and malice because you belong to Christ. Wherefore, "gird up the loins of your mind," and see that you put not any advantage in their way, or they will be quick to avail themselves of it.

Recollect, also, the misery you endure when you are not in a right condition. If your minds are not girded up, and you feel as I do, you must be very wretched. Whenever I feel that I cannot pray as I wish, I am very unhappy. When I come here, and cannot join heartily in the song,— well, I have to groan in the chorus somehow or other, but I am not satisfied with doing that. When I feel at all wandering from God, and my heart is getting astray from him, I am not happy, I cannot be. Oh, no! Blessed be God, when he made us the second time, he made us so that we could not rest anywhere but in himself. Even our first creation necessitated our coming to God if we would be blessed, but our second creation makes it even more so. If the Lord be with us, we are merry all tute day long, and can praise and bless his holy name. There is no fasting for us while the Bridegroom is with us; but if he be once withdrawn, then shall the children even of the bride chamber fast. You know that it is so; wherefore, brothers and sisters, do not be content to be in this sad, loose, lax condition; but "gird up the loins of your mind." May the Lord, in his mercy, enable you to do so!

III. So I finish with just a few words upon the last question, which is, How Are We To Do This?

One way is, when you are out of sorts, and out of order, go and confess it; go and tell the Lord all about it. Search and see how you got into such a condition; confess the sins that brought you into such a plight, then hate them with a perfect hatred. Feel that you cannot continue to live in such a state; cry unto God, "O Lord, do not let me find any kind of happiness until I have it from thine own right hand; and, until I am right with thee, give me misery, brokenness of spirit, and true godly sorrow for sin!" That confession will naturally melt into prayer for quickening. While you are mourning your misery, God will help you to pray yourself out of it. Never listen to the voice of the tempter who says, "Do not pray because you cannot pray;" but, say within yourself, "Now I must pray more than ever; now I will pray; and, however poor and broken my prayer may be, such as it is, it shall be presented unto God."

Then, next, while you are on your knees, resolve with energy that the evil shall not continue. To make your resolution effective, cry to him who first took you out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings, and ask him to do that over again in another sense. He will as readily lift you up again as he did at the first. If you are willing to be half-dead, you may be wholly dead before long. If you are willing to be idle and sleepy, the spirit of slumber will steal over you just as if all the drugs that poison men had been poured into your soul. If it has been so with you to any degree, resolve, with hearty shamefacedness, that it shall not be so any longer.

And then, to help you carry out this resolution, sit down and meditate much upon the love of God to you,— the eternal love, the boundless love, the love that chose you, the love that bought you, the love that sought you, the love that fought for you, the love that has wrought in you all the good things there are in you. And, as you meditate upon that wondrous love of God, his Holy Spirit will work upon you. You will feel your heart beginning to thaw, and the streams commencing to flow as the brooks do in the springtime when the icy grasp of winter has been relaxed. Therefore, give your heart up to such meditations as are likely to stir your spirit, and to change its sad condition.

Then, try also to let pour understanding be convinced concerning your position and condition. Think much about what the Lord's requirements really are. I like to see some passion in religion, but I am much more fond of principle. A man may be moved to great

zeal and earnestness at certain revival meetings, and it is well if he has made the great decision; but I am glad if another man has sat down by himself, and has calmly considered the whole question, and, acting upon principle, has yielded himself to the Savior. He knows what is true; he knows what he is, and where he is, what God has done for him, and what God expects from him; and, without any passion or excitement, he steadily plods on, and continues firmly confident in the Lord. One translation of our text is, "Gird up the loins of your understanding." Get your understanding tightly strapped up, for, in proportion as you know the truth, the truth shall make you free. When you can give to everyone who asks you for it a reason for the hope that is in you, it is better than when you simply say, "I believe that I am saved because I am so happy;" for, perhaps to-morrow, you may not be happy, and then you may fancy that you are not saved. That is simply going by your feelings, and is a most unsatisfactory method. Rather say, 'I understand, from the Scriptures, that the sinner is bidden to believe in Jesus, and when he does so, God himself assures him that he is saved. "Let your religious convictions be founded on good sound arguments; get some "wherefores" and "**therefore's**," so that you may have something solid to stand upon. This is the meaning of the words, "gird up the loins of your understanding." I wish that all who profess to be converted knew what they were converted from, and what they were converted to, and what being converted really means. I am afraid that a great many jump into what they call religion, and then jump out of it again; and if they only act according to the energy of the mesh, they will jump out of it, before long. He who is converted only by eloquence will be unconverted when that eloquence is over. He who is converted merely by excitement is likely to be unconverted when that excitement has died away; but he who is taught of God, and knows the solid doctrines upon which we are grounded and settled, will steadfastly abide in the truth.

I know that I have spoken all of this for nothing so far as some of you are concerned, because you have nothing for which to gird up your mind, and nothing with which to gird it. For you, as you now are, there is no inheritance; for you there is no place of joy, no hope of peace. O poor soul, first recollect that you must be born again, for it is no use to gird up the natural man that is unsaved; it is the new man that is to be gird about. Your first business is with God, and with his Christ, and with the eternal Spirit. The first necessity for you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to accept that gospel which says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." That being done, then you have something to gird up; God grant it to every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.