

- ***READ I Peter 1:1-9*** As Peter begins his first letter to the saints scattered throughout the land, he acknowledges the fact that they are aliens in the lands in which they live. Sure the governments might see them as citizens, but Peter recognizes them as being aliens for, as Paul states in **Philippians 3:20**, their true citizenship resides in heaven. This letter of Peter actually shares quite a lot with Paul's letter to the Philippians. Both letters focus on the subject of remaining faithful in the face of trials. Paul was in prison during his writing of **Philippians**, and it seems as if these Christians were enduring their own difficulties for their faith in Jesus. **(1:6,7)**
- Just as Paul laid forth the blue print for that which allowed him to overcome tribulations, so does the Apostle Peter in this letter lay forth a spiritual blueprint for that which would allow not only himself, but all Christians to overcome the trials they might face as disciples of Jesus Christ. The goal was simple in the mind of Peter. The goal was to overcome this world with its temptation, sin, and trials so that he and all of the faithful might obtain *"the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."* **(1:9)**
- There isn't much that is all that complicated about this goal. Peter simply wanted for all Christians to live and fight in such a way that trials would be overcome and all disciples would have their souls saved. Yet, while this goal might not seem overly complicated...any goal that is to be accomplished must be planned for before it can be executed. In this letter, the Apostle Peter lays for his preparations for achieving this goal, and these preparations are what we are going to spend out time in consideration of this morning. There are four preparations that we need to be working to do so that we might live in such a way that the goal of the salvation for our souls might be achieved. Let us consider these preparations of Peter so that they might be our preparations, as well.

I. Prepare your minds for action. (1:13)

- A. If we are endeavoring to do anything, then it is necessary that we approach said endeavor with the proper mindset because lacking the proper mindset can and will quickly result in our failure. Two things that stand out to me from this verse alone that we must think about when it comes to preparing our minds is that our minds must be sober or clear in thought and secondly that our minds must be focused and fixed on the proper things.
- B. We must recognize that while we are giving every effort to achieve the goal of the salvation of our souls...Satan is giving every effort to hinder our efforts. He is trying to stop us from achieving our goal of loving and believing God and being saved. He knows that in order for us to do well that we must have minds that operate well. Minds that are clear and focused will be minds that will aid us in achieving our goal, so Satan is therefore striving very strongly to cloud our minds and get us focused on the wrong things.
- C. Later on in this letter, we see Peter again keying in our being sober in our minds. In **5:8**, Peter focuses specifically on having a clear mind when it comes to Satan and his efforts to defeat us. This plays right into our point we are making because preparing our minds for action means that we must not just know what we are capable of, but we are aware of what the enemy is capable of. We must think clearly and carefully about our abilities and about what Satan is capable of. We must recognize that we by ourselves are helpless against Satan. It is only by the power of God that we can withstand temptation and overcome. **(I Corinthians 10:12,13)** The second we allow Satan to cloud our judgment to think that we can overcome on our own...we are done and already defeated. Satan is crafty and conniving in his efforts to overtake us and we must acknowledge our weakness and take hold of God's strength and power if we are to overcome in this battle.
- D. But also, we must recognize that having a clear mind will great aid us in making sure that our focus stays fixed on the hope for which we are doing what we are doing. We don't struggle against Satan and his evil powers for not reason, but we do so because we are wanting to be showered in the grace of God that is made available to the faithful. If we will keep our minds sober and focused on the glory that will be experienced at the coming of Jesus, then we will quickly and effortlessly turn away from the temporal pleasure of anything this life might offer. We will truly store up treasures in heaven and forget about what Satan promise here. Our minds must be prepared for action!

II. Prepare your defense for your hope. (3:15)

- A. Later on in the letter, Peter turns to the central issue of the letter and speaks specifically to how they could prepare for some of the trials they would face. He says that they could overcome by preparing their defense when they were questioned why it is that they believed, lived, and hoped the way that they did. We too can overcome trials and achieve the goal of the salvation of our souls by preparing our defense for the hope that we have.
- B. While our occasion to give a defense might look a bit different from those of the Christians of the first century...our necessity to be prepared is no less important. For those disciples who were facing legitimate persecution, they had to be ready at a moment's notice to answer at the threat of bodily harm why they lived the way they did and taught what they taught. For these individuals, **3:13,14** hit so close to home because they were actively living under the threat of severe persecution.
- C. At this time, we just are not to the point where they were in regards to how severe of persecution we face. That isn't to say that what we face as disciples in the 21st century isn't real or distressing, but it is just different. We might not ever have a gun to our heads and be asked to confess Jesus and die or deny Him and live, but we will be asked time and time again why it is that we do what we do. We will be asked time and time again why the church we are a part of doesn't use instruments. We will be asked time and time again why we teach baptism as part of God's salvation plan. We will be asked time and time again why it is that we stay away from certain actions and why we deem them as immoral. These are the real life situations and questions that we face, so will we be ready to answer these questions? Will we be ready to answer why it is that we believe in God when the atheist who is asking thinks we are fools for believing in some imaginary being in the sky?
- D. We might not see these questions as being all that important, or we might not see the necessity of really needing to be able to answer these things...I mean...I can just text and ask the preacher, right?? Not that I have a problem per se with Christians asking me for some help answering a questions, but Peter seems to indicate that our ability to give this defense has something to do with how we see Jesus. Notice in **v.15**, "*sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.*" We noted the need to prepare our minds, but here there is preparation that must be done in our hearts and it is shown through our ability to give a strong and legitimate defense for our hope and faith. If we truly acknowledge Jesus as holy and as our Lord then He will truly rule over us, and we will have a true knowledge of Him and His will for us. But that doesn't happen out of nowhere. No, having that true knowledge is a result of our efforts to know His will. Those who want to know Jesus will invest the necessary time to be able to truly know why it is that they do what they do. They will be a people who spend much time in the Word learning how to answer the skeptic or detractor. Those types of people will be ready to give that defense. We must be that type of person, and it begins with the preparation of our hearts to know Jesus so we can defend Him and our faith in Him.

III. Prepare your resolve for trials. (4:1)

- A. Again, this verse goes back to the main purpose of this letter which is disciples dealing with persecution. The goal is to overcome and be saved, and Peter states that we can overcome and obtain the salvation of our souls if we will prepare our resolve to overcome trials before the trials even come.
- B. Peter encourages disciples to be resolved against trials by appealing to the one who first suffered. Here in **4:1**, Peter looks to the fact that Jesus also suffered in the flesh, but He did so for a purpose. His purpose is spoken to in **Philippians 2:1-11** where Paul discusses that Jesus was willing to leave heaven and suffer for the sake of others. Jesus was willing to suffer and overcome because he had a purpose in mind. This must be our mindset, as well. We must be resolved to endure and overcome our trials because we have a purpose. Our purpose will determine our behavior.
- C. Think about it. If our purpose is to prosper in the flesh and enjoy every blessing life has to offer... then won't we do everything we can to avoid any kind of obstacle or trial? I certainly think that makes sense, and there are many people who live life with this in mind. Very few people will go into an endeavor, knowing that it will bring troubles, and be resolved to continue on. But that is exactly what Jesus did in coming to earth, and that is what Peter expects for disciples to do. The salvation of our souls doesn't come easily...Jesus had to give up and overcome much, and we must prepare ourselves to be resolved to overcome the trials and obstacles put in our way by Satan if we want to be with God.

IV. Prepare your account for judgement. (4:5)

- A. In this letter, Peter realizes that one such trial that disciples could face is from those who they used to run along with in their immoral way of living. Remember from just a moment ago, we need to be ready to give a defense or answer for why it is we do or believe what we do, and it might be that those questions are from people that we used to be close to. Peter warns the disciples that they might be questioned as to why they have changed, but they needed to keep in mind that they were a changed people because they would have to give an account for their lives in the judgement.
- B. We know well the words of the Preacher from **Ecclesiastes 12:13,14** *"The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."* If we want to be prepared to receive the salvation of our souls then we need to be sure to put in strong preparation to give a good account to God for the way we have lived this life.
- C. Now for many of us, the idea of having to give an account for our lives in the judgement is a terrifying because if I'm being honest...there are a lot of things that I have done that I won't want to have to answer for before a righteous God. Maybe you feel that same way, too. Thankfully, part of putting our faith in Jesus and committing our lives to Him involves forgiveness for our sins. I think about the Corinthians and what Paul says in **I Corinthians 6:9-11**. In these verses Paul lists all of these sins that would lead a person to not be a part of the kingdom of God, but the key words are at the beginning of **v.11**, *"such were some of you."* Just a couple of verses here in **I Peter 4:3-5**, notice that Peter says something similar concerning the prior conduct of these Christians. *"For the time already past is sufficient for you..."* The past conduct of these disciples was enough sin for a lifetime. They were to move on past that so that their lives in Christ would prepare them to be able to give a good account of themselves before God.

V. We prepare so that we *"may live in the spirit according to the will of God."* (4:6)

- A. Finally, all of these things put together could be summed up with what is said in **4:6**. The gospel had been preached to all people so that they might prepare themselves to live a life that is lead by the spirit, and that life would be a life that pleases God. God is pleased when those who seek to serve Him do so through proper preparation.
- B. When we prepare our minds, our defense, our resolve, and our account...when we put in the great effort to do these things then God is pleased because we are doing things according to His will. God's will is for our salvation, and we can come to enjoy the salvation of our souls at the coming of our King Jesus Christ.

It has been said before from **John 14** that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Certainly that idea rings true considering what we have discussed this morning. I hope that each of us are extremely impressed with the effort, work, and preparation that must be put forth if we desire to obtain the ultimate outcome of our faith...the salvation of our souls. May God be with us and help us to be a prepared people who will enjoy the ultimate glory of heaven with Him for all eternity. ***PRAYER***