

Rest Your Hope Fully

At the beginning of the 20th century, a super-ship was built. The Titanic was about 295 metres long – that's three or four city blocks – and carried 900 tons of baggage and freight. It was a luxurious ride, costing \$4300 for a first class, \$1750 for second class, and \$30 for third class. It used 14,000 gallons of drinking water every 24 hours. There were nine decks on the ship, and it had four elevators: three in First Class and one in Second Class.

The Titanic was the largest marine vessel in the world at that time. Its whistles were the largest ever made and could be heard from a distance of 11 miles. It had a double bottom 1.5 meters thick to ensure additional safety, and was designed to remain afloat with any two compartments flooded, possibly three, enabling her to withstand a collision at the joint of two compartments.

It was widely regarded that such "Olympic class" liners as the Titanic were practically unsinkable and were themselves life boats. But on the night of April 14, 1912, the Titanic hit an iceberg and began to sink. A great portion of the passengers were drinking, dancing, gambling and having a great time, unaware that the ship would soon sink. The band continued to play its songs, even when people were being put into lifeboats.

A group of gamblers went on deck to look around and returned to their cards to sink with the ship. Even after they were warned, many went on to bed with confidence in the Titanic's ability to stay afloat. Others joked about the life preservers, with some actually putting the life belts on and dancing around the deck while others stood back and laughed. Others refused to put the life preservers on because they said they didn't want to get dirty and mess up their gowns.

Some were urged to get into the boats, and they said, "Why should we get into the boats and go out into the cold night, when we'll just be coming back on board in a few minutes?" Many of them laughed when the porters and stewards tried to warn them that the ship was going to go down. Many people could have been saved had they gotten into the lifeboats.

The total capacity of all the life boats put together was 1100 souls, but only 705 people could be convinced to get into the life boats. Lifeboat after lifeboat pulled away from the ship with only 10, 12 or 15 people in them, when they had a capacity of nearly 60. There was room for more than the few who got in, but people wouldn't get in them. Why not? Because they wouldn't believe that the ship was going to sink.

Out of 2201 people, only 711 in total were rescued. One thousand, four hundred and ninety died that night. For many of them, the reason was that they had placed their hope fully upon something that was sinking. They had believed in something that was fallible, they had fully trusted in something that was going down, and it led to their death that night. For us today, the call is, what are you resting your hope in?

Where and how to rest your hope

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

In this first chapter of his epistle, Peter tells us a lot about our hope, and now for the first time in 1 Peter, he switches to the imperative mode, and tells us to do something. And what he says is this: 'rest your hope fully upon the grace of God.'

Notice the first word **1 Peter 1:13** is 'wherefore', or 'therefore'. This action we must take is based upon the great grace we have been contemplating in the previous verses. In light of such great grace, what must we do? Rest our hope fully upon it.

And what does it mean to rest your hope fully? To be fully satisfied, be fully content, be fully at rest, be fully assured, be fully confident. Have fullness of joy in advance. Place your trust unreservedly, without wavering. Do not half-heartedly place your hope; place all of it.

Hope is joy in the present about the future. Hope is necessarily future-oriented. Hope is like the joy you feel as someone you love approaches from a distance. It has not yet come to the hug or the handshake, but the joy is already present. Hope is the anticipation of a birthday or a special day or event, that though it is not yet here, the joy is as you consider you are getting closer to it.

Hope is the feeling as you drive down to the coast, and you first sight the ocean. You are not there yet, but the joy is already, at the thought of getting there soon. Hope is based on a strong confidence, a strong assurance. It's based upon trusting something, believing something to be true.

The Titanic passengers had placed their hope fully upon the 'unsinkable' Titanic, and it doomed them. Peter here says, have joy in the present about the future. Why on the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ? Because then we will experience all that God is for us personally. There will be no limits.

So, how does this provide hope? Because the truth that you are getting closer to a full experience of God, time-wise, fills us with enduring hope. Because the truth that you are getting closer to a full experience of God, experience-wise, fills us with rejoicing hope.

The revelation of Jesus Christ is the end point – the absolute climax. But that future is growing clearer with our everyday experience of it. We are getting more and more down payments on it, more and more tastes of the final feast. And as that future flows into our everyday experience, it grows our hope.

So Peter says effectively to have full confidence, full consolation, full assurance, full happiness in the present based upon the absolute certainty of how the future will look. How do we do this? By doing two things.

1. Gird up the loins of your mind

Here Peter uses a metaphor from ancient times. People in Eastern lands wore long, flowing robes. If you needed to run, or get ready for action, you would gather up the robe into your girdle, the belt you wore around your waist, your loins. So the phrase, gird up your loins, meant: dress for action, get ready. Here he applies this whole metaphor to the mind. We might say 'dress your mind for action.'

This is a participle; in other words, it is a helping verb. It is describing and explaining how we rest our hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So, what does he mean, and how will it help us hope?

If you think on the metaphor he is using, Peter is saying, in order to rest your hope fully, you need to be thinking in a way that is not obstructed, cluttered or filled with obstacles. He is saying, if your mind or your thinking is sloppy, it is going to come between you and resting your hope fully on Christ. Sloppy thinking, poor thinking, unbiblical thinking – is obstacle number one to a heart fully hoping in the grace of Christ.

So Peter is clearly expecting that if we are to hope in Christ, we must get rid of thinking that would trip us up; thoughts that clutter up our minds instead of clearing them. What kind of thoughts trip us up? Here are some thoughts to help us understand what kind of thinking clutter up our minds.

Truth is what is. Truth corresponds to reality. Truth is absolute. Your beliefs are what you accept to be true. Your beliefs do not *make* something true. It is either true or it isn't. Many people accept things to be true that aren't true. But that's their belief. There is no such thing as 'my truth'; there is only 'my belief' and *the* truth.

Now unbelief is rejecting what God says is true. When you reject what God says is true, you are exercising unbelief. You are holding another set of beliefs, but you are showing unbelief toward God. And the number one thing that clutters up our minds, that causes us to not hope in God, is unbelief. When God says – life is like this, and we believe it is not, then we are living in a fantasy world, and our life is going to malfunction. Let me illustrate.

Let's imagine an adult who truly believes in the Easter Bunny. He talks to his business associates about the Easter Bunny coming this Easter, he gets all excited and glad as he begins to talk about what kind of chocolate eggs he will get this year, he asks for a picture with the man in the Easter Bunny suit at the malls, and talks to him seriously about what kind of eggs he wants – well, what is going to happen to this man?

He is going to run into a lot of trouble in life, he is going to lose friends, family, probably his job, because he is living in a fantasy world. His belief does not correspond to reality. In the same way, the one who lives as if what God says is untrue is living in a fantasy world. To act like God is not in control, to act like God will not judge sin, to act like God does not love you, to act like God does not see you: this is a fantasy world.

The real world is everything God says. That's why I reject the reasoning that says, 'you can't just home-school kids or send them to Christian schools or not expose them to filthy images on TV or the movies. Otherwise they won't be in touch with the *real* world.' The more kids hear and understand what God says, the more in touch with the real world they are! Those who know little or nothing about God are the ones most out of touch with the real world, because they are living in a universe made by God and acting like He doesn't exist.

Remember we have said that our hope is all that God said He will be to us, and all that God said He will do for us, now and through eternity. Unbelief then is believing that God is going to be to you something other than what He said He would. God said, 'I will be your Shepherd, Your Father, your Protector, your Saviour, your Bridegroom.' Unbelief says, 'God

won't be my shepherd, I had better lead myself or find someone else to follow.' Unbelief says, 'God won't be my Bridegroom, I had better find love somewhere else.'

Unbelief is believing that God is going to do to you something other than He said He would. God said, 'I will meet your needs. I will forgive your sins. I will love you. I will lead you. I will strengthen you. I will provide for you.' Unbelief says, 'God won't meet my needs. I had better worry about it.' Unbelief says, 'God won't forgive me, I had better avoid Him.' Unbelief says, 'God won't help me, I had better rely on myself.'

And as you can tell, you cannot simultaneously believe two things that are opposite. You cannot believe God is going to meet your needs and at the same time be worrying about how your needs are going to be met. You cannot simultaneously believe you have been forgiven and feel guilty. You cannot simultaneously believe God is always up to something good in your life, and be despairing about where your life is going.

Similarly, you cannot be believing that God is fully in control of life, while at the same time being disgusted and frustrated with what is happening. You cannot claim to believe that God is always with you, and be terrified of being alone. You cannot simultaneously believe that God is trustworthy while looking elsewhere for someone or something to lean on. You cannot simultaneously believe that God is wise while being sceptical that His Word is the best solution.

The fact is: you never believe opposites at the same time. You are, in fact, believing one thing, and at those times, your belief is rejecting what God says about Himself and what He will be to you and do for you. Unbelief says, 'God is not enough for me. God is not doing enough for me.' Unbelief is at the root of all hopelessness, anger, anxiety.

As we interpret what we know about God from our experiences instead of interpreting our experiences in light of what is true about God, we will always end up with a wrong view of God, and that will keep tripping us up. Peter says: get rid of this kind of sloppy thinking. Undisciplined thinking pretends to believe opposites. The kind of mind that will trip you up is flooded with unbelief. It rejects what God says to be true of Himself, while claiming to believe it.

The end result is we undermine the true value of God's Word about himself. We pay lip service with vague statements about God, but our behaviour reflects our beliefs. Peter says, no more time for sloppy thinking. No more tolerance for opposites in the same mind. When we gird up the loins of our mind, we do it with truth:

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness...

Ephesians 6:14

Truth is what corresponds to reality, and reality is found in God's Word. Truth is what drives out unbelief. Tighten up your mind. Do not allow the sloppiness of personal interpretation and personal opinions on life to trip you up. Let your mind be completely saturated with truth about who God is.

God is always going to meet your needs. God is always going to love you. God is always going to be doing something good in your life. God is always going to forgive your sin. God is always going to be in control of your life.

When our minds are saturated with these truths and with the Scriptures that teach these truths, our mind is dressed for action. We are not going to be tripping over our own thoughts. The way to rest our hope fully on Christ will be open because the mind is girded up, with no space for unbelief. If you have no hope, it is probably because you are tripping over half-truths, lies and wrong ideas.

But if that is the negative idea, Peter then gives the positive as well.

2. Be sober

The word here for sober means sober-minded. Just as a drunk man loses control of his mind, loses clarity of thought, loses a sense of right and wrong, loses his sense of what is polite and not, so the opposite of a drunk mind is one that is in full control of its faculties. The mind is sharp, clear, collected. The mind is temperate.

So do not allow your mind to be cluttered down with unbelief, but in contrast, let it be a vigilant, focused, self-controlled, collected mind. Let your thinking be disciplined and free from excess. It is as if he is saying, do not allow your mind to be intoxicated with unbelief. Do not allow your mind to come under the influence of unbelief. Rather, let it live on the water of truth.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the great preacher from England wrote a book called *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures*. In it, he talks about the fact that as believers, we must not listen to ourselves, we must preach to ourselves. He quotes the Psalmist David in **Psalm 42:11**: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” In pages 20-21 of his book, Jones then comments:

“Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? That those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man’s treatment [in Psalm 42] was this: ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul?’ he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says, ‘Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you.’ Do you know what I mean? If you do not, you have had but little experience. The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: “Why art thou cast down” – what business have you to be disquieted? You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: “Hope thou in God” – instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way. And then you must remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man, “I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God.”

Preach to yourself, do not listen to yourself. A sober mind is a mind that preaches to itself the truth of God's Word. When it hears the thought, 'Things don't look good this month,' the sober mind girds up the loins with truth and says, 'But listen, God said He will supply all my needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus.'

When it hears the thoughts, 'No one cares about me,' it says, 'Now listen here, Self, God said that He has loved me with an everlasting love. God said, He will never leave me nor forsake me.' When your self hears the thoughts, 'Nothing is going my way. It's all going wrong,' the sober mind does not listen to those thoughts, it preaches the truth back to them, saying, 'God said He is working all things together for good in my life. God is completely sovereign.'

And so we could go on. The sober mind preaches the truth to itself, it does not listen to the whispers of unbelief. As you can tell, for the sober mind to have truth to preach to itself, it must know the truth. That is why your exposure, your intake, and your retention of the Word of God is your access to the promises of God to you. Little exposure, little intake, little retention – little access. When trouble, adversity, problems come – can you gird your loins about with truth? Not effectively.

That is why God began the Psalms with this exhortation:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psalms 1:1-3

And this is how we rest our hope fully upon the grace of our God. We do not allow the garment of unbelief to trip us up. We dismiss the thoughts of unbelief, and replace them with the truths about our God from the Word. What God says about Himself and His acts toward us are either always true, or never true. There is no middle ground.

You either believe what God says – that He is always good, always forgiving, always loving, always providing, always in control, always present, always trustworthy, always wise, always the same – or never like that. But if you are to rest your hope fully on these facts about who your God is, and who He will be to you, you must memorise verses that teach them. You must think often on these truths and apply them to your life. You must test every thought you have by these truths about God.

The 'girding' is removing the clutter of unbelief. The 'soberness' is the focusing of attention on our hope. This is how we rest our hope fully on the grace that is to be brought to us. We refuse the thoughts that cloud, pollute, dilute or dampen our view and trust in our good and great God. We instead, with clear, focused minds, preach the truth to ourselves about who God is to us, and what God will do for us all through this life, and into eternity.

We find full satisfaction, full contentment, full gladness, full joy in this future grace that is increasingly flowing into the present. So the choice is yours. Interpret life and God through your circumstances. Or interpret life and circumstances through your God. The one is, and will lead to, unbelief. The other is faith and leads to that joyful experience called hope.