

THE APOSTLE PETER'S EXHORTATION.

"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; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." – 1 Pet. 1:13-16.

TO fully appreciate the apostolic exhortations we need to become well acquainted with their several characters, to note their circumstances, to mark their zeal and faithfulness, and to remember that every word of exhortation addressed to the Church has the substantial backing of their worthy examples. They endured hardness as good soldiers, and suffered much for the privilege of declaring the truth. In their writings are blended a high degree of the powers of logic, eloquence, pathos and an inspiring enthusiasm which must awaken in every student of their teachings a measure at least of the same sacred flame.

Though written so long ago the above words of exhortation lose none of their force to us. They were penned for the instruction of the whole Church, down to the end of the age. The introductory, "Wherefore," refers us to the glorious hope of our high calling, and of the necessarily severe measures required to fit us for our exalted inheritance, as mentioned in the preceding verses. Peter would have us appreciate what it is to be called with such a high calling – to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith. (Verse 4.) He would have us know that, if faithful, we are to be made "partakers even of the divine nature," and that we are to be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, of all things. – 2 Pet. 1:4.

As the spirit of God draws our hearts into closer fellowship and sympathy with the divine mind, the value of these "exceeding great and precious promises" is more and more fully realized, until there glows in our hearts the same holy enthusiasm that so filled the hearts of the apostles. And only when our hearts are thus warmed and our minds thus awakened, are we prepared to understand the Apostle's "Wherefore," upon the inspiring comprehension of which depends our ability to heed the earnest exhortation which follows.

If our hearts are not duly inspired with this hope – if we have begun to lightly esteem it, or to forget it, or to think of it as an idle tale – to heed the counsel of Peter, here given, will be impossible. If, therefore, we realize that a spiritual lethargy has to any extent been creeping over us, imperceptibly benumbing our spiritual senses, so that the truth is losing its inspiring power upon us, our first duty is to betake ourselves to prayer and to communion with God through his Word, that its sanctifying power may be realized.

"Wherefore," then, you that discern the prize of your high calling, and who are endeavoring to press along the line toward it, "gird up the loins of your mind" – as in the illustration, strengthen and fortify your purposes and efforts, renew your determination, redouble your diligence, cast aside the weights of unnecessary worldly cares, increase your **[R1595 : page 356]** zeal; and, as the Apostle Paul also urges, run with patience the race set before you. Run, not like one who is merely beating the air, but like one who has a purpose in view, and who, in desperate earnest, is *determined* to make his calling and election sure.

Having thus "girded up the loins of your mind" for a long, steady and determined effort, he further counsels, – "Be sober:" do not allow yourself to become excited and, under the spur of

excitement, to exhaust all your spiritual vitality in a very short time, and then to suffer a relapse into coldness or discouragement; but thoughtfully consider and prepare for a long and patient endurance of all the discipline and trial of faith and patience necessary to prove an overcomer and worthy of the blessed reward promised "to him that overcometh." The race before us is not one to be run by fits and starts, but by "*patient continuance* in well doing." Soberly, thoughtfully, we are to weigh and endeavor to realize the import of the exceeding great and precious promises and to gather from them their invigorating inspiration; earnestly we must apply our minds and hearts to the instruction of the inspired Word of God, availing ourselves also of such helps – of "pastors and teachers" and their literary productions which prove harmonious with, and helpful to, the study of the Scriptures; diligently and patiently we must submit ourselves to all the transforming influences of divine grace and truth; and then loyally and faithfully we must devote our consecrated talents, however few or many, to the great work of preaching this gospel of the Kingdom to all who will hear.

Such a sober view of the situation fortifies the mind against discouragement, and enables us, as the Apostle suggests, to "hope to the end for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Such a sober view keeps Reason on the throne of our minds. And Reason says, The divine call to joint-heirship with Christ clearly implies eligibility to the exalted office; the divine promise clearly insures divine grace to enable us to fulfil the conditions; the divine provision for my justification, by faith in the precious blood of Christ, releases me from the condemnation to death; and the righteousness of Christ, imputed to me by faith, fully supplements all my weaknesses, so that before God I stand approved in him. Sober Reason also says, the directions given in the Scriptures to those who would run the race are clear and explicit, and make plain every step of the way to those who are truly and fully consecrated to the Lord. The

examples of the Lord and the Apostles on the pathway shine with a moral luster and glory that cannot lead us astray. If we walk in their foot-prints we will assuredly reach the same goal.

Therefore, in this sober view of our high calling and privileges, and the abundant resources of divine grace, let us not be discouraged or overcome in any way, but let us hope to the end for the grace (favor) that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ – at his second advent. The Church has enjoyed much of the divine favor all through the age of her probation and trial; but the grace to be revealed at the revelation of Jesus Christ – when he comes to reign in power and great glory – is her exaltation with him to sit with him in his throne. This glorious consummation, the Church all through the age must steadily keep in view: but how glorious is the privilege of those of its members living in this end of the age, when already, even before our change into his glorious likeness – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye – we begin to enter the joys of our Lord.

Those who are still sober and faithful, and who have not cast away their confidence, have been led into the secret of the Master's presence; and they have been made to sit down to meat, and the Master himself has come forth and served them. Yes, our hearts have been made to burn within us while he has opened up the Scriptures and made us understand, from the testimony of the law and the prophets and the apostles, that the time is fulfilled – that the end of the age is now here, and that the Lord of the harvest is present to direct and supervise the great work of reaping the fruit of precious seed long ago sown in tears, and now to be gathered with joy and singing; **[R1595 : page 357]** while he has opened up to us the treasures of divine wisdom and grace displayed in the plan of the ages, which God purposed before the foundation of the world, which he has been gradually working out in the ages past, and which is now nearing its glorious consummation.

Oh! what feasting, what rejoicing there has been around the table of the Lord, as one after another the treasures of divine grace have been opened to us, revealing the glories of the new heavens and the new earth and the blessedness of all the obedient subjects of him who sitteth on the throne to reign in righteousness; how all tears shall be wiped away from off all faces, and how the reproach of God's people is to be taken away. Well indeed did Daniel prophesy, saying, "O the blessedness of him that waiteth and cometh to the thousand, three hundred, thirty and five days" – the days of the Lord's second presence, when all that is written to be accomplished by his glorious reign shall begin to come to pass.

Seeing then that such are our privileges and hopes, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and god-likeness." (2 Pet. 3:11.) Being purified by this hope, ought we not, as the Apostle exhorts, to fashion ourselves, not according to the former lusts (desires and ambitions, which we had) in our ignorance, but as he who has called us is holy, should not we also be holy in all manner of conversation – in all our words and ways? Since it is written, "Be ye holy; for I [the Lord] am holy" (1 Pet. 1:15,16), should not we who are called to be partakers of his own nature and glory be holy also?

Some Christians have the erroneous idea that God does all the fashioning, and that his children are to be merely passive in his hand; but Peter does not so express it. He exhorts us to fashion ourselves according to the divine instructions. There is a work to be done in us and about us, and those who are not up and doing, but who passively sit and wait for the Lord to work miracles in their behalf, are greatly deceived, and are giving the enemy great advantage over them, which he will certainly use to bind them hand and foot and cast them into outer darkness, unless they bestir themselves to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, while God, co-operating with their earnest effort, works in them,

to will and to do his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12,13.) "Watch and pray," beloved, lest any of these snares of the enemy entrap you and beguile you of your reward.
