

## **“Prepare Your Minds for Action” (1 Peter 1:13–25)(4.23.23)**

### **Amplified Bible 1 Peter 1:13-25**

<sup>13</sup> So prepare your minds for action, be completely sober [in spirit—steadfast, self-disciplined, spiritually and morally alert], fix your hope completely on the grace [of God] that is coming to you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>14</sup> [Live] as obedient children [of God]; do not be conformed to the evil desires *which governed you* in your ignorance [before you knew the requirements and transforming power of the good news regarding salvation]. <sup>15</sup> But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all *your* conduct [be set apart from the world by your godly character and moral courage]; <sup>16</sup> because it is written, “You shall be holy (set apart), for I am holy.”

<sup>17</sup> If you address as Father, the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in [reverent] fear [of Him] *and* with profound respect for Him throughout the time of your stay *on earth*. <sup>18</sup> For you know that you were not redeemed from your useless [spiritually unproductive] way of life inherited [by tradition] from your forefathers with perishable things like silver and gold, <sup>19</sup> but [you were actually purchased] with precious blood, like that

of a [sacrificial] lamb unblemished and spotless, *the priceless blood* of Christ. <sup>20</sup> For He was [a]foreordained (foreknown) before the foundation of the world, but has appeared [publicly] in these last times for your sake <sup>21</sup> and through Him you believe [confidently] in God [the heavenly Father], who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are [centered and rest] in God.

<sup>22</sup> Since by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves for a sincere love of the believers, [see that you] love one another from the heart [always unselfishly seeking the best for one another], <sup>23</sup> for you have been born again [that is, reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose] not of seed which is perishable but [from that which is] imperishable *and* immortal, *that is*, through the living and everlasting word of God. <sup>24</sup> For,

“All flesh is like grass,  
And all its glory like the flower of grass.  
The grass withers  
And the flower falls off,

**25**

But the word of the Lord endures forever.”

And this is the word [the good news of salvation] which was preached to you.

## **The word of God for the people of God.**

LET US PRAY.

Title: **“Prepare Your Minds for Action”**

INTRODUCTION:

The lion's share of my Facebook friends profess to be Christians. It amazes me how often they will post something on social media that is inconsistent with the Word of God. Often it sounds like a nice sentiment, but it is false. It reflects the pop culture worldview and not a biblical Christian worldview.

This week, one of my Facebook friends posted a meme about which they agreed very strongly, according to their own comments. It said, “Your beliefs don't make you a better person, your behavior does.” In a sense, that sounds correct. It is what we DO that matters. The underlying implication is that what people SAY they believe is inconsistent with their behavior.

So...how do I respond as a friend AND as a pastor? I commented with one verse of Jesus' words: Luke 6:45 (NIV84) **“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”**

It is what we truly believe that determines our actions. Renown pastor, the Reverend Dr. John Piper, in his analysis of today's scripture, states, "The mind serves the heart." Yes, there is a direct correlation between the heart, mind, and how we live out our daily lives. This seems perfectly logical and reasonable to me.

How could it be any other way? If our actions are consistently in violation of our beliefs, we are at war with ourselves. We would be traitors to our worldview. This would lead to depression, anxiety, and even insanity.

BODY:

People often ask me about my sermon preparation. They ask about how long it takes. They ask about my process. I explain that my sermon preparation is like making a stew. I put all the ingredients into the pot and it simmers the whole week through.

I consciously and diligently work on it. I study the scripture. I read commentaries. I read sermons and devotions. This correlates to cutting up the meat and vegetables, putting them into the pot, and seasoning as needed.

Also, I work on it subconsciously. When I sleep, my subconscious mind is simmering over it. I know this because sometimes I wake up thinking about

it. When I am doing routine activities or showering, I can tell my subconscious mind is at work. Probably, the subconscious mind is always active, but at times, I am more aware of it than at other times.

My activities during the week inform the message. A person or an interaction might trigger a thought. Current events and everything I am exposed to during the week are filtered and evaluated.

The first sermon I read this week was titled "The Christian Race." Last Monday, was the Boston Marathon. It was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Boston Marathon bombing. And, I watched the movie, "Forrest Gump."

Then there is the King James Bible translation, which uses a strange metaphor instead of "Prepare your minds for action. *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind - Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.* This is a very rich, deep, and expansive metaphor. But, the reference is outside modern experience. Let me try to explain it. [change into the robe]

In the Apostle Peter's day, men wore robes. As you can imagine, doing any kind of physical labor was hindered by these robes. So, they would gather up any of their clothing and tuck into a belt or girdle wrapped around their lower abdomen – also known

as their loins. Then they would not be encumbered or entangled by their clothing. They could move freely, work, and even run.

To gird up the loins of our minds rightly, we must be secure in our belief in the truth of the gospel. We should be bold, strong, and courageous in our profession of faith and in our work for the kingdom of God. We should be clear-headed, single-minded, and sincere. We must be firm and resolved. We are to fortify our minds against the wiles of the Enemy. Do not let faulty thinking or a secular worldview cloud your judgment. Do not be led astray by fancy words and degrees of ungodly men and women.

At various times in life, I have been a runner. I would train for and compete in races. In high school, I would run races of 1 or 2 miles on the track, and 3 miles for cross-country. Later, while in the Coast Guard, I would run 10K races, which is 6.2 miles. Probably, the furthest I have run at one time is 13 miles. Yes, it was physically and mentally tough; but, that is only half of a marathon.

There is a website called "exploring your mind" that posted an article, Running a Marathon: Mind over Matter. Here is an excerpt:

“Practicing a sport is both a physical and psychological discipline. **Facing an opponent, running a marathon, or joining a sports team requires effort, training, and putting mind over matter.**

Thus, **in order to achieve your goals, whether they’re professional or personal, it’s imperative to consider your state of mind.** Concentrating and preparing your mind for a marathon is essential.

## **Psychological training**

**Marathons are the mother of all obstacles tests.** When you train for one, you have to run for many miles and feel pain everywhere.

In fact, good marathon runners, those who truly train for them, say that the toughest part is precisely the training and not the marathon itself.

Thus, **physical training has to always be accompanied by [resilience training](#).** What many people forget is how important it is to put mind over matter. There will be moments where the temptation to quit the race is overpowering, and this is when your willpower must kick in.

There are certain moments when the runner starts to ask questions like: “What am I doing here when

I could be sitting down on my own couch reading a book?" These questions may make them seriously consider giving up.

Another important psychological factor, aside from confronting pain and exhaustion, is confronting [anxiety](#), that feeling you get a few days before the race.

## **The challenge of running a marathon**

Finally, it's important to understand that you shouldn't **decide to participate in a marathon lightly**. Marathons represent a long and difficult preparation process for both the body and the mind.

Doing this incredible challenge implies great effort. A person shouldn't undertake a marathon if they don't train for it and don't run shorter races to practice.

**In other words, it's important to build a physical and mental resistance for 3 to 4 months before the race.** This is because running a marathon requires incredible physical resistance as well as putting mind over matter.

Listen to this story about one marathon runner:  
**The One Who Got Caught Between the Bombs**



*Twelve-time Boston Marathoner Vicki Miller, 63, was nearly at the finish line on Boylston Street on April 15, 2013, when [two bombs detonated at 2:49 p.m.](#), just one block apart.*

"I had turned 60 that year and I wanted to put my personal mark on Boston, so I ran hard. I was so singular in my focus—I had friends volunteering at mile markers along the route and I just waved; didn't stop to say a quick hi like I normally would. Right before the 26-mile marker, I moved over to the right side of the road to see a tribute to the victims of the Sandy Hook shooting. It was the only thing I wanted to make sure I saw along the course.

Then *BOOM*. I could see flames and smoke and the force of the blast shooting out across the road to the left up ahead of me. I knew it was a bomb. I hit the deck just before the second one went off behind me.

At that time of day, there's a shadow that covers half of Boylston—I looked toward the finish line and saw the medical tents just past it, and sunlight was shining on them. So I thought, I'll run to the light. I was afraid there'd be more bombs along the sides of the road so I ran down the center, past the site of the first bomb. I'm an ICU nurse, but I didn't have it in me to look. I was terrified,

cold and in pain from the race, and I told myself it wasn't my job that day. Thank God there were so many other people helping.

I crossed the finish line and a little farther down the street, volunteers were lined up holding hundreds of finishers' medals. A girl put one around my neck. I told her I didn't want it, that I wasn't trying to finish the race—just to get out of there. Then I looked behind me and saw that there was nobody else coming.

Eventually I found my husband, who'd also been running and was just ahead of me on the course, and the bus I'd organized for the 50 other marathoners from my local running group. I sat there and accounted for everybody who'd gotten on the bus in the morning. We didn't leave until 8:30 p.m. that night.

I wasn't going to run Boston again. I was too scared. But the September registration date came around. I hadn't meant to do it, but when I crossed the finish line that day, just trying to get to safety, I'd qualified for 2014. I didn't want to use that qualification though. It didn't feel right. My husband signed me up anyway because he thought I'd regret not running.

In November, I read in the newspaper that an organization had planted tens of thousands of daffodil bulbs along the route. I don't know why, but that started to turn me around. I still hadn't made up my mind as race day got closer, but then something big dawned on me. Boston is like the Super Bowl of this sport, and the crazy thing is, I get to participate.

So I ran. This time I stopped at every mile marker where I saw friends volunteering and gave them big hugs. I missed qualifying for 2015 by a minute and a half, but I didn't care. I crossed the finish line and I let myself celebrate.""

The Apostles Peter and John ran to Jesus' tomb on that first Easter morning. It was just as the women had proclaimed. The tomb was empty. Jesus was not there. Jesus had risen from the dead. Their lives were suddenly changed forever. And...so are our lives.

That Jesus was resurrected, that Jesus was alive, was a foundational belief of the early Church. It is one of the primary reasons for the rapid growth of the Christian Faith under the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Today's 13<sup>th</sup> verse starts with the word "so," while other translations say therefore or wherefore. That

means they are pointing back to the previous verses which we studied last week. Peter tells us that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the signature event of our faith. From it we have new birth INTO a living hope; a living hope.

Being a Christian in the early days required determination and fortitude. There was persecution and isolation. Here Peter offers another source of hope to the beleaguered believers as they live into their new birth. We are to look forward to Jesus' Second Coming. They believed this could happen at any time. We too are to live as if Jesus could return any day, even today.

Our Amplified translation said, fix your hope completely on the grace of God that is coming to us when Jesus Christ is revealed. Other translations say, set your hope fully; set all your hope; and the King James says, **hope to the end**. One of my running coaches taught us to keep our head up and focus on a goal ahead of us. Focus on the person ahead of you and close the gap. For Christians, Jesus is the one ahead of us. He is the firstborn of the dead. The Christian life is not a sprint, it is a marathon. By fixing our attention and our mind on Jesus' return, we are preparing for action.

We are called to obedience. We are called to holiness. We should not look, act, or believe like the world. We have been set apart from the world by our godly character and moral courage. Peter associates evil desires with ignorance of the ways of God, but we know the truth and the truth has set us free from sin and empty living. Notice that our minds are critical in the Christian life, to know what is right and to have the will to do what is right. We KNOW that we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

How do we live this life? We have been spiritually transformed, renewed and set apart for God's purposes. This rebirth was by the Spirit of God and is sustained by the Spirit of God. AND, God has gifted us with the living and everlasting word of God.

Let me use an Etch and Sketch as an illustration. How many of you have used one? You can create images on it with the two dials. When you want to get rid of that image and start over, you turn it over and shake it. Now you have a fresh slate to begin again.

I wish it was that easy with our minds. I would like to take every ungodly image stored in my brain, bring it to the surface, shake my head and it would permanently disappear. For every thought that

dishonors the Lord, I would write it on the Etch and Sketch of my mind, shake my mind and it would be gone. I would completely clean house by emptying every memory storeroom in my brain of pride, unforgiveness, anger, lust, jealousy, and envy.

The process of becoming holy is not that easy but it can be done. We must be diligent and determined. Take charge of your thoughts and immediately dismiss the undesired ones. Pray a short prayer – forgive me Lord and empower me. Sing a song of praise to God. Learn your Bibles. Memorize scriptures and then recite them when you are asserting your authority over your mind.

We can change our focus: Philippians 4:8 (NIV84) ...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. At the same time, turn away from unworthy things. Do not bring home more junk to store in those memory banks of your mind.

A marathon runner pays strict attention to their diet. So should we. What we feed our minds is critical. Garbage in – Garbage out. Negative self-talk enforces a negative self-image. Claiming your rightful place as a child of God enforces the belief

that you are an Image-bearer of your Heavenly Father. What we feed our spirit will either bless our growth into the likeness of Christ or it will grieve God the Holy Spirit. We need to purposely pursue our Christian walk in faith, hope and love.

## CONCLUSION:

In the movie Forrest Gump, it seems that Forrest is running his whole life. As a child, Forrest runs to escape bullies. This was quite the accomplishment because he was encumbered by large leg braces. Once he breaks free of the leg braces, Forrest runs for the love of running. Then Forrest runs for the University of Alabama's football team. After graduating, Forrest runs to escape danger in Vietnam. Then Forrest runs back into danger to rescue his friend and fellow soldiers; carrying them back to safety. Later in life, Forrest runs across the country several times because his heart is broken.

Forrest had a diminished intellectual capacity, but his mind was to be envied because of other attributes. He was a highly optimistic person, a highly hopeful person. He was extremely loyal. He had a great capacity for love. And, he was always ready to forgive. Forrest also worked hard even after he became wealthy.

LT Dan was one of Forrest's few friends. He was one of the men that Forrest saved in Vietnam. He

hated life as a double-amputee. In his misery, he asks Forrest why he didn't let him die on the battlefield. He asks Forrest, "Do you know what it's like not being able to use your legs?" Forrest replies, "Yes, I do."

Lt Dan had his life changed through Forrest's unrelenting loyalty and love. LT Dan is blessed by receiving state of the art prosthesis legs, which is revealed at the wedding of Forrest and his beloved Jenny.

Forrest Gump was fiction, but this story is real life:

"Dack Axelle of Ashland, Virginia, was one of hundreds who participated in the Richmond Newspapers' Marathon, October 1982. As an eight-year-old, his distance was five miles. Unlike his competitors, Dack was a winner before he started! Born with spina bifida, a congenital birth defect that damages the nervous system, Dack has never been able to walk without leg braces and crutches.

Even though he has no feeling in his legs from the knees down, he is forever challenging his limitations. With the extraordinary support of his family, he trained hard for the marathon, and finished the grueling five miles amid generous applause. The next year, Dack Axelle, now [nine years old], completed 13.1 miles in the 1983



Marathon. Afterwards, the screws in his braces had to be replaced!”

1 Peter 1:13 (KJV 1900) So, 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;

YES! Prepare your minds for action. Yours is not a passive or impotent faith. It is faith in the Living Lord, Jesus Christ. Come Lord Jesus come!

Amen and amen. Let us pray.