

SERIES: "THE RICHES OF SALVATION"

MESSAGE #10

"PRACTICING OUR SALVATION" Part 1

I Peter 1:13

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

We are familiar with the terms "Practicing Attorney" and "Practicing Physician" aren't we? The implication of such designations is that the individual to whom those terms are applied has studied law and/or medicine, passed their bar or Medical Board exams and are actually practicing their profession. After they retire, they take down the signs and no longer advertise that they are "practicing." They are still attorneys and physicians but they are not now practicing their professions.

A practicing Christian is analogous to a practicing attorney or a practicing physician in that he/she is actively and publicly, practicing their profession – else why become a lawyer, doctor or Christian if one does not intend to practice what they profess to be? Unfortunately, many professing "Practicing Christians" have evidently retired from living a Christian life!

Illust. I was listening to a "Call-In-Talk Show" host on the radio in my automobile. He was defending the aberrant behavior of prostitutes, public drunkenness and nudity, etc. A caller reminded the Radio Host what the Bible teaches about such sins and the Host's comments were both startling and telling. He replied, "Do you mean to tell me that people are actually supposed to live what is taught in the Bible? I thought it was sort of a moral guideline and that you could either take it or leave it."

I believe that host's reply is pretty much what our culture has adopted as their view of the Bible's teachings. And, not a few who claim the name "Christian" apparently feel the same way about it. Wouldn't it be great if God would save us and then within a matter of seconds, take us to glory? We would not have to face temptations, trials or tears in this life. We would never have to battle with the world, the flesh or the devil.

Such a view is a selfish view. It does not take into account why God leaves us here in this sinful environment. He has a purpose for our lives and that purpose is for us to be "salt" and "light" on this sin-infested planet, thereby bringing Him glory. Therefore, let us unashamedly advertise our relationship to Christ by practicing our profession.

In the first 12 verses of I Peter chapter one, the emphasis, for the most part, is on doctrinal matters. Beginning in verse 13 and throughout the remainder of the chapter the emphasis is on the practical aspects of salvation.

Verse 13 begins with the word, "Therefore". The writer is basically saying, by using the word, "therefore", that: "The aforementioned truths having been stated, now practice them. Practicing our profession will result in a Christ-like lifestyle that will be evidenced by our *attitude* and our *anticipation*. These are the two commands in v. 13. Consider first,

I. THE ATTITUDE THAT WILL STABILIZE US.

“gird up the loins of your mind, be sober...”

In order to experience stability in our daily walk with the Lord there must be two actions that we take: we must “concentrate” and we must “consecrate.” I will explain:

A. There Must Be Concentration. “Gird up the loins of your mind.”

Illust. The analogy of “girding up” the mind is taken from the long, flowing Oriental robes. I have seen the practicality of this action when ministering in Bangladesh. There, and elsewhere, the men wear the long over-garment. When they want to run fast, or when they work in the rice paddies, they reach down between their legs, taking hold of the hem at the back of the garment and, pulling it forward and upward, tuck it into their waist-band. The legs are then free of the entanglement of the garment. They have “girded up their loins.”

By the usage of this analogy, Peter is saying, “Pull in the loose ends of your mind.” “Think! Concentrate!” He is saying what Paul said to the Corinthian Christians: “Bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor.10:5) We need to get serious about living the life we say we have! Insincerity is ruinous to spirituality..

Illust. The tennis player, Jimmy Connors, is famous for shouting at the judges who ruled his serve or returns out of bounds: “You can’t be serious!” Well, yes you can! Hell, heaven, sin, Satan, life, death, etc. are serious subjects.. Peter is saying, “Get serious, concentrate your minds upon the Lord.”

We live in unstable times. If we want stability in our lives, we must have cranial Christianity! Isaiah encourages us with these words: “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.” (Isa 26:3 NASU)The attitude that will stabilize us must be one of concentration. Furthermore:

B. There Must Be Consecration. “be sober.”

The word “consecrate” means, “to make holy; to set apart for sacred use.” Note the words, “be sober” or “keep sober in spirit” as the NASU has it. He is not here warning about drunkenness, that warning is elsewhere. The writer here is saying, “be clear minded, alert, serious, sober in your thinking”.

The mind is where the Christian’s battle is won or lost. The reason so many are unstable is that they do not have a mind that is consecrated to God. Paul wrote to the Philippians warning them about thoughtless and loose living in these words:

“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things.”
(Philippians 3:17-19)

Notice that last statement: “who set their mind on earthly things.” Do you know what

the word “amusement” means? To “muse” means “to think”. The “A” is the negative prefix and therefore the word “amusement” literally means “not to think”. We are amusing ourselves to death – literally.

There are those Christians who have adopted the world’s mind-set. Their attitude toward spiritual truth is not serious or sober. Christians who do not have a mind that is consecrated to God are unstable.

Paul was talking about a consecrated mind when he wrote to the Colossian Christians saying, “ If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. *Set your mind on things above*, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2)

If we are going to set our minds “*on things above, not on things on the earth*” there must be concentration and consecration! Concentration leads to consecration! The Devil does not want us to *concentrate* for fear that we will *consecrate* ourselves more fully to the Lord. Consequently he has many distractions and attractions to keep us from gathering up the loose ends of our minds and being sober minded.

What is your attitude toward being a “Practicing Christian” and literally living by biblical standards? Is your attitude like that of the Talk Show host?

Illust. Chuck Swindoll wrote an excellent statement about attitude. He said, "The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude in life. Attitude is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It will make or break a company...a church...a home." He continues: "The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the past...we cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude...We are in charge of our attitudes."

The space age has taught us many things. For instance, the pitch of the satellite is called its “attitude”. When I first heard the Space Engineers talking about the “attitude” of the space capsule from Houston, Texas, I thought, “has that spacecraft become so advanced and sophisticated that it has a mind of its own and has developed a bad attitude?”

The “attitude” of the airplane determines whether it is ascending or descending. Nose up – ascending; nose down – descending. So it is with the spacecraft. Now here is the principle: “*Attitude determines altitude!*” This is true, not only in aerodynamics but in spiritual dynamics as well. One’s spiritual attitude determines one’s spiritual altitude.

Illust. I enjoy singing some of the worship choruses that are focused upon the One worshipped and not upon the worshipper. However, I am not about to abandon the older hymns and Gospel songs. One of the Gospel songs that expresses the desire every practicing Christian should have is “Higher Ground”:

“I’m pressing on the upward way,

New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.'

- Johnson Oatman, Jr.

That's the attitude that will stabilize us. But there is another command in verse 13 – Peter also tells us about:

II. THE ANTICIPATION THAT WILL MOBILIZE US.

Back to v. 13 - "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ..."

We will not only be stabilized by being "Practicing Christians," but we will also be mobilized! The mobilizing truth is the return of Jesus Christ. Let us think about the anticipation of Christ's coming and how that truth should mobilize us. It will:

A. Mobilize Us To Watchfulness.

We are told to "hope to the end" in v. 13. Paul writes to Titus about "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13) Are you looking? Perhaps a better question is, "Are you ready?"

Illust. Chuck Swindoll told about a fellow who worked in a machine shop with him during Seminary days. His job was to clean up the machines and the shop. His clothes were always dirty with grease and grime from the shop. One day Chuck noticed that it was almost quitting time and he asked the man, "are you ready to go home?" He answered, "Yes." But he still had on his old dirty clothes. So Chuck said to him again, "are you sure you are ready to go home? You still have on your old dirty clothes." He said, "I'm ready."

As soon as the whistle blew for the 5:00 quitting time the man unzipped his overalls and stepped out of them and underneath the overalls he had on nice clean clothes. Chuck said, "When the whistle blew all the fellow had to do was unzip, step out, punch out and he was gone."

Someday there will be a trumpet blast from heaven and we will be going home! Let's Step out of our dirty lifestyles now for when the Lord comes it will be too late to change clothes!

The anticipation of the Lord's coming should mobilize us to watchfulness and mobilize us to witness.

B. Mobilize To Witness.

Paul writes about the motivation to witness in 2 Cor. 5:11 - "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

This verse is not saying that the Lord is fearful but that those who know the Lord fear Him; that is, have a reverential awe of Him, and as a result want to persuade people to come to Christ. The Living Bible transliteration puts this statement in plain

everyday street language like this: "It is because of this solemn fear of the Lord, which is ever present in our minds, that we work so hard to win others." That was Paul's testimony – is it ours as well?

Illust. I was preaching in an Evangelistic Meeting in Indiana years ago. One night my subject was, "A Prepared Place For Unprepared People." Of course, I was referring to Hell. In that service was a mother and her two young daughters about ages 10 and 12. Their Father was unsaved and the girls were so concerned that their Father might spend eternity in that awful place that when they went home they sat at the bed-side of their Father, told him about the place for unprepared people and tearfully pled with him to trust Jesus as his Savior. Which he did! This has been a family united in Christ and serving in their church for many years.

The anticipation of the coming of the Lord and fate of those outside of Jesus Christ should mobilize us to watch and to witness. This is what the "Practicing Christian" will be found doing when the Lord returns!

CONCLUSION

Professing salvation is one thing, practicing salvation is quite another. You and I will never fully practice our salvation until Jesus Christ is central in our lives. Truly, building our lives around Jesus Christ is practicing our salvation!

Illust. A father wanted to read a magazine but was being distracted by his little girl playing in the room. Finally, he tore a sheet out of his magazine on which was printed the map of the world. Tearing it into small pieces, he gave it to her, and said, "Go into the other room and see if you can put this back together."

Later she returned and handed him the map correctly fitted together. The father was surprised and asked how she had finished so quickly. "Oh," she said, "on the other side of the page is a picture of Jesus. When I concentrated on putting Jesus back where He belonged, then everything came together."

Practicing our salvation is putting Christ at the center of our lives by concentrating upon Him and consecrating ourselves to Him; anticipating His return and watching and witnessing in the meantime.

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