

September 23, 2007 by Steve Brandon



How To Face Trials

1 Peter 1:13

1. Prepare your minds.
2. Be sober.
3. Fix your hope.

One of the saddest stories in the history of our nation has to do with our dealing with slaves. Slave traders would travel to Africa on ships and capture people as if they were unreasoning animals. They would be bound with chains and cast into an unsanitary hull of a ship and brought to America. Those who survived the trip would be sold as property. Many times husbands and wives were separated from their kids and separated from each other. Against their wills they would be forced to work as slaves here in America.

Often these people faced a horrible existence. Many of them labored long and hard hours in the southern sun. Often they lived in run-down housing. Their masters were cruel and unsympathetic. They lived under the threat of constant punishment. They had no hope in this life.

Yet precisely because of this dismal experiences in this life there were slaves who heard the good news about Jesus Christ and believed in Him. One of the most attractive doctrines to these slaves was the hope of heaven, in which they would be truly free someday. They came to express their experiences in song many of which were about heaven. Some of them we know today:

Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.
Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan and what did I see, coming for to carry me home.
A band of angels coming after me, coming for to carry me home.
(Chorus)

If you get there before I do, coming for to carry me home.
Tell all my friends I'm coming too, coming for to carry me home.
(Chorus)

If I get there before you do, coming for to carry me home.
I'll cut a hole and pull you through, coming for to carry me home.
(Chorus)

Sometimes I'm up and sometimes I'm down, coming for to carry me home.
But still my soul feels heavenly bound, coming for to carry me home.

Many have commented on how this song had a hidden meaning for the slaves as they sung. Rather than talking about heaven, they argue, the slaves were thinking about getting across the Mason-Dixon line to freedom. Perhaps this was the case. But, certainly, there were many slaves who sang this thinking of it's straightforward meaning.

When slavery was abolished in 1865 the plight of African-Americans was far from over. Oh, perhaps in our country slavery proper had been abolished. Yet equality across our nation was hardly established. (It's still an issue today, as thousands of protestors rallied this week in Jena Louisiana for civil rights. We still have a long way to go in this area). [\[1\]](#)

Even after the slaves were freed they continued to sing their spirituals which expressed the desire of the heart for a heavenly home where true freedom would reign. They sang songs such as this one:

I've got a robe, you've got a robe.
All of God's children got a robe.
When I get to Heaven goin' to put on my robe.
Goin' to shout all over God's Heaven.

Heav'n, Heav'n.
Ev'rybody talkin' 'bout Heav'n ain't goin' there.
Heav'n, Heav'n.
Goin' to shout all over God's Heaven.

I've got a crown, you've got a crown.

All of God's children got a crown.
When I get to Heaven goin' to put on my crown.
Goin' to shout over God's Heaven.

I've got shoes, you've got a shoes.
All of God's children got shoes.
When I get to Heaven goin' to put on my shoes.
Goin' to walk all over God's Heaven.

I've got a harp, you've got a harp.
All of God's children got a harp.
When I get to Heaven goin' to play on my harp.
Goin' to play all over God's Heaven.

I've got a song, you've got a song.
All of God's children got a song.
When I get to Heaven goin' to sing a new song.
Goin' to sing all over God's Heaven.

Now, why did they sing so much about heaven? They had no hope here on earth. The trials that they faced thrust them beyond this present life to look to the life to come. This is a blessing that trials can bring upon our lives. They can stir our souls to look for something beyond this life. This is exactly what Peter tells us to do in our text of Scripture this morning.

Facing trials, Peter tells us to place our hope upon the life to come. If you haven't done so already please open your Bible to the book of 1 Peter. For the past month we have been working our way through the this wonderful epistle and I trust that the Lord will allow us to be here for months to come. We now find ourselves in chapter 1, verse 13. In fact this one verse will be our text.

1 Peter 1:13

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober [in spirit], fix you hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

If you look at this verse with a bit of care, you can discern three commands that Peter gives to his readers.

1. Prepare your minds for action.
2. Keep sober in spirit.
3. Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

These three commands will form the basis of the three points of my outline: (1) Prepare your minds (2) Keep sober (3) Fix your hope.

In the scope of 1 Peter these three commands are actually the first point of application that Peter gives to his readers in this epistle. For twelve verses Peter has spoken nothing by way of application. He began with two verses of introduction. He continued with ten verses describing the greatness of our salvation from various different angles. Finally he comes with his first application here in verse 13.

Peter's flow of thought has been building up to this point. You see that in the first word in verse 13, "Therefore." This word is a signpost that tells us how portions of Scripture relate. What was written before the "therefore" is the grounds upon which what follows is based. In other words, Peter is saying, "In light of everything that I have just written, here is the conclusion that I want to draw out for you." I want for you to "(1) Prepare your minds for action. (2) Keep sober in spirit. (3) Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The logic goes the same way that I have been telling you for the past few weeks: "Yes, you are facing trials and difficulties in your life right now (verse 6). Yes, you may well find them to be very difficult for you to bear. However please remember what awaits you. You have an inheritance waiting for you that is absolutely incredible! It is imperishable. It is undefiled. It is unfading. The prophets longed to have the salvation that you now enjoy. The angels long to experience the grace that you now experience. Here is how you are called to act: Set your minds upon your salvation; not your trials."

My message is appropriately entitled, "How to Face Trials." This is Peter's context of Peter's application in verse 13. He gives three commands that counsel you for the day of trial. (1) Prepare your minds for action; (2) Keep sober in spirit; and (3) Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Of these three commands there is one of them that stands out above the others. It is the third command: "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." For the past four weeks this has been the application that I have been pulling out for from Peter's words: "Your salvation is absolutely incredible! Focus upon it and not upon your trials! Fix your hope completely on your future salvation at the return of Christ!"

Now, when I say that this is this third command that stands out above the others, it's not simply because I think that it's the best application that Peter gives, nor is it because I think that it summarizes everything the best, nor is it because that's where the thrust of the application of my messages have been each Sunday.

I actually have a grammatical reason for this. In the Greek text the first two commands are participles whereas the third command is a true command. In other words the first two points of application are supportive of the third point of application. You might well translate it like this: "Therefore, *by* preparing your minds for action, *by* keeping sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Indeed the English Standard Version does a good job of bringing out this subtle nuance in the Greek text. Here is their rendering: Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In saying this, I'm not trying to minimize the other two commands. Preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded are important. I'm not trying to minimize them in any way. Yet grammatically they support the third command to fix your hope on the full realization of your salvation. With this in mind I want to present my third point first. In so doing I think that the points will flow better for us.

3. Fix your hope.

"Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." In saying these things, Peter is simply communicating how those who are experiencing trials in their lives ought to look beyond the trial to the day when Christ is revealed in all His glory. "How should I face the trials of life?" Peter says, "Fix your hope beyond the trial."

Before we go much further in this text we need to realize that the Biblical usage of "hope" is much different than what we normally think of when we use the word, "hope." We use the word almost as if it represents an optimistic dream that something might take place as we desire. We use hope like an expectant wish. We say, "I hope that the Huskies will win the football game." Or, we say, "I hope that I will do well on the test." Or, we think, "I hope that things will turn out all right." Or, we tell others, "I hope that what I say will help her." But, this isn't how the Bible uses this word, "Hope." In the Bible hope is an assurance of things to come. In the Bible hope is the confident expectation of future events.

We could go to many places in the Bible to show this. But one clear one comes in Hebrews 6:18-19. As you read these verses consider how the word, "hope" is used.

Hebrews 6:18-19

By two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the *hope* set before us. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, a [*hope*] both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil."

We have two unchangeable things: (1) God has promised and (2) God has confirmed His promise with an oath. It's impossible for God to lie but He makes doubly sure that we know how firm His promise is. We have "strong encouragement" then to "take hold of this hope set before us."

The writer to the Hebrews calls this hope, "an anchor of the soul." It's something stable. It's something sure. It's something steadfast. When the Scripture uses the word, "hope," that's what it means. It's a firm assurance. It's a confident expectation of future events.

To be sure there is an element of uncertainty. The uncertainty in this word comes in the fact that hope is future. Yet there's a confidence in this word that fails to come through in the English rendering. When we are facing a trial Peter is saying that we ought to steady our souls in what is firm and secure. The trial may appear to be firm and steady. Actually the promise of your ultimate salvation is the steady and secure thing. Fix your hope beyond the trial to the coming grace.

This is everything that Peter has been alluding to so far. Verse 3 tells us that in His mercy, God has caused us to be born again to a living hope. By His grace God has transformed us to have a hope of something future which far outweighs the difficulties of today.

Notice the divine intent in these words that come in verse 3. When God regenerates us He has a goal in mind. He wants to change us so that we no longer have our affections upon this present world. Rather, He wants for us to have our affections placed upon heaven where our hope is. Peter had worked hard to demonstrate how certain our hope is. It is reserved in heaven for us. God is protecting us until we finally experience it. This is the messages of verses 1-12.

We have a great hope to look forward to enjoying. Such a hope should carry you through your trials. We all know how this works by way of our own human experience. There are certain days or events that you look forward to in life. It may be your birthday. It may be your wedding day. It may be a vacation. It may be your last day of work before retirement. It may be graduation from college. It may be the football game that you get to play in. It may be day that you finally get out of debt. It may be the day when you get to meet someone you have only heard about.

As you look forward to that day there is a way in which that day will give you strength and fortitude to endure this day as the day of enjoyment is upon your heart. You count down your days until this event. You count down your hours. The joy of the future event gives you reason to continue through your difficulties of the present hour to get there. Many wives of husbands serving in Iraq find the greatest comfort in looking to the day that their husband comes home. You can even imagine a wife comforting herself, "Only six months until Jim comes home. I can endure that long." Then, some time comes later, "Only three weeks to go. I've made it this far. Certainly, I can make it a bit further." Within a week, she says to herself, "Only four days until I see my beloved husband! I can make it!" This is how we ought to live our lives.

Let me guide you to a perspective: For instance, suppose that I would come to you and tell you that I have a deal for you. I have \$200 million in a Swiss bank account. I'm planning on giving you this money. However you aren't going to get the money today. You will get it in 30 days, provided that you pass one condition. Here's the condition: You can't say anything bad about my friend Greg.

Now, during these 30 days I'm giving Greg permission to try to get you to say something bad about you. He may show up at your work and bad-mouth you to your boss. He may show up at your house and invite himself in. While in your house, he might spill coffee on your nice couch, he might smash some of your fine china, he might burn some of your photo albums, he might steal your DVD collection. He might ask to borrow your car and leave it wrecked along side the road. He might break a few of your windows. He might steal someone else's stuff, plant it in your house, and call the police, saying that you have stolen their property, which might mean that you spend some time in jail. However should you endure this treatment for 30 days without saying anything bad about this man \$200,000,000 is yours. Could you do it? Could you keep your mouth shut when brutally provoked if \$200,000,000 were waiting for you at the end of your trial?

You might be able to do it. It might be really hard depending upon how nasty he gets in attempting to provoke you. But, you might be able to do so. If so, the only way that you will ever be able to do such a feat is if you are constantly thinking about the \$200 million that's coming your way in 30 days. [\[2\]](#)

This is the scenario in which Peter describes his readers to be. The following verses demonstrate how they were walking righteously, but were being persecuted for it.

1 Peter 2:12 - "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation."

1 Peter 3:9 - "not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."

1 Peter 3:17 - "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."

1 Peter 4:13-16 - "but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name."

Peter's readers were walking righteously but were being slandered and reviled for taking the name of Christ. Peter told them to continue to walk in righteousness and holiness. Also it may well be the case that they would suffer greatly for it. His counsel is this: "Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Ultimately Peter is telling his scattered aliens to focus their attention upon the day when Christ Jesus is revealed to all the world for who He is. This is the day when the entire world will behold Jesus in all His glory. This is what the word "revelation" means. It means "the revealing" of Jesus Christ. This means the day when Jesus Christ is clearly seen by all as the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

When Jesus is revealed for all the world to see there will be a mighty judgment. The secrets of men's hearts will be revealed. Those who have not embraced Jesus Christ will be cast away into eternal darkness. On the other hand we who have hoped in Christ have a different expectation on that day. We can expect grace on that day. Peter says, "Fix your hope completely on the **grace** to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

When the revelation of Jesus Christ takes place and the entire world beholds Him many will encounter judgment. When the Lord comes, it's time to settle accounts. However we who have believed in Christ will get grace. It's not merely that we will receive mercy as God withholds the punishment that we deserve for our sins. Rather God will go beyond this. He will give us what we don't deserve. We will receive grace. On that day we won't merely be pardoned and set aside. Rather on that day we will eat at the marriage supper of the Lamb as we begin to enjoy our inheritance. We don't deserve any sort of inheritance at all--we who have spurned God lived for our own lusts and pleasures. However in His grace God will give it to us on that day. This is pure grace, all because we are trusting in Christ!

This is what Peter's saying, "Focus your hope on the day of grace, rather than your day of trial," but notice once more what Peter says. He says, "fix your hope **completely** on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Peter is saying, "fix all of your hope upon that day." This isn't a partial hope. It's a complete hope. In other words there is no excuse for hoping in anything else.

In the day of trial hope in anything else will be of no help. Hope in people will disappoint you. Hope in money will run out. Hope in your own ability to get out of the mess may prove futile. To be sure these things may well bail you out in your trouble. You may well have someone come to your aid and help. You may well have the financial resources to help you through. You may find the strength to solve some of your problems but not in every case. Your only sure-fire way of rejoicing through trial is to work hard to set your hope completely on the grace to come to you in that final day. It has a wonderful way of putting everything in perspective.

I remember dealing with a family going through a trial. Things were very difficult for them at this time. I remember the husband of this family was doing very well with things. He said, "Really, not much has changed. God is still on the throne." Such a perspective will help in the day of trial. Our lives are so short! Eternity is so long! The way to live victoriously through the things of today is to "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Let's turn our attention to our second point this morning (which is actually my first point).

1. Prepare your minds.

Peter's admonition here is for the mind to be ready *for* the day of trial. Peter's admonition here is for the mind to be ready *in* the day of trial!

"Be preparing your minds" for the day when the trial comes. Literally, Peter writes here in verse 13, "gird the loins of your mind." In the ancient world to which Peter was writing this verbal picture would have made complete sense to the readers.

In Peter's day men didn't wear pants. Rather they wore an outer garment like a sheet that they wrapped around their body. They looked a bit like robes. Now when there was work to be done or a fast strenuous walk to take they would gird up their loins so they wouldn't be hindered. In other words they would take their long flowing robe and pull it tight to their legs and finally fasten the loose ends around their waist. In this way they would be able to stoop down to work in the field or they would be able to walk quickly or run.

Perhaps you remember the time when Elijah called down the fire upon the altar on Mount Carmel. After God demonstrated Himself to be true and Baal to be false Elijah ordered the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal to be killed (1 Kings 18:40). At that time he knew that he was in danger of life and so we read in 1 Kings 18:46, "[Elijah] girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel." In other words Elijah ran faster than the chariot in which Ahab rode. In order to run that fast he had to remove the hindrances in his robe.

Peter's counsel here isn't to gird up the loins of your robe so that you can really get to work. Instead Peter said, "Gird up the loins of your mind." In other words Peter is saying that you need to tie up the baggage in your mind so that your mind is free to think clearly in the day of trial. Let there be no hindrances in your mind that would cloud your perspective of the day of grace.

I grew up in an athletic world. Throughout high school and college I was always playing a sport. I played soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter, and baseball in the spring. One of the things that was immensely clear to me throughout that time is the role of the mind in athletic contests. It's important to have your mind engaged and ready to play. You will reach a point in the second half (or in the fourth quarter) when your body plain wants to quit! You have been kicked in the shin or knocked to the ground. Your legs are tired and your energy is drained. Your body may well say, "That's enough! You don't need to run so hard." If your mind isn't ready to play, you'll slow down and won't run quite so hard. Without your mind engaged, you won't make the extra effort. Conversely if your mind is ready you can endure through the bodily fatigue.

There is a reason why football coaches are known for their "pep talks." A coach wants to engage the minds of his players to be ready to take the physical punishment that they are about to endure! They need to be psyched up with a mind that's ready to play. There is a reason why football teams will gather in their huddles will a bunch of hoopla before the game. Players need to have their minds ready to play hard.

This is what Peter is talking about here! Peter says, "Get your mind in the game." Except, it's no game that we're playing here. He's talking about life. He's talking about eternal life. Peter says, "prepare your mind."

The battle of the Christian life is the battle of the mind. He who thinks right will live rightly. He who things wrongly will live wrongly. You ask, "How can I face the trials of life that come upon me?" "Gird up the loins of your mind." It's no accident that the Bible is full of exhortations to think upon what is right. Consider the following:

Philippians 4:8, "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."

Colossians 3:2, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

Psalms 119:11, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You."

Psalms 37:31, "The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip."

I love the picture of Psalm 1.

Psalm 1:1-3

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

Now think with me about this picture. The Psalmist is looking at this tree that is planted by the streams of water. There is a constant nourishment that comes to this tree and allows it to continue to produce it's fruit even through the dry season which means months without rain. Whereas the tree a hundred yards away from the stream doesn't have this constant nourishment. When an extended season of drought come it may dry up. The fruit will be dried up or it may not come at all. It's all because the stream continues to water the tree.

However, Psalm 1 isn't about a tree. It's about a man. It's about a man who has been preparing his mind. He has been preparing his mind by walking in righteousness. He has been preparing his mind by meditating upon the word of God. So when the heat of the trial comes he will remain strong and mighty as the word of God will come and constantly nourish his soul. The trials of this life won't be devastating to him. Rather he will be rejoicing and bearing fruit because his mind has been in training, ready to deal with the trials of life.

This is what Peter is talking about. He's talking about the importance of the mind being ready for the battles of life. How do you get your mind ready? Meditate upon the word of God.

There is a sanctifying, cleansing, preparing way in which the Scriptures will help you in the day of trial. I remember one time being especially discouraged in the ministry. I had a meeting with some people and came home ready to quit the ministry. Yvonne wanted to engage me in

conversation. I wasn't ready for conversation. I just went to bed and told Yvonne how discouraged I was. I told her that I was ready to quit. Bless her heart, she took out the Bible and began reading verses to me as I was discouraged. I'm telling you, the word of God ministered to me in a great way that evening. It filled my heart with right thoughts about God, with right thoughts about the ministry, and with right thoughts about other people. I'm so thankful for a wife that helped me in my weakness to think rightly about God.

Particularly here in 1 Peter the exhortation comes to think rightly about what's beyond the trial. Think about your hope! Fix your hope by preparing your mind!

The Psalmist in Psalm 42 does this. On several occasions he writes, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God" (Ps. 42:5, 11; 43:5). This man was in despair because of the trials that had surrounded him. What was his solution? It was to think rightly about God. It was to think rightly about his future with God. "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him."

When you are dealing with the trials that come upon your life you need to do the same thing. Tell yourself to "hope in God!" Tell yourself that God, "according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter. 1:1-3).

We are "garbage in, garbage out" creatures. If you eat junk food you will be fat and out of shape but if you eat rightly and exercise appropriately your body will be fit and ready to go on with life. Spiritually it is the same thing. If you think upon junk your mind will be fat and out of shape. Yet if you are regularly and steadily thinking upon the truths of God's word, you will be prepared to face the trials in your life.

Focus your heart and attention upon the salvation that will be revealed. Then you'll be prepared to endure the struggles that come upon your life. "Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, by preparing your minds for action, and by being sober in spirit." (This is found in our third point (which is actually #2 in your outline):

2. Be sober.

"Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you by preparing your minds for action, and by keeping sober in spirit."

At this point, your translation may say, "be self-controlled" (NIV) or it may say, "being sober-minded" (ESV) or it may simply say, "be sober" (NKJV). The Greek text simply says, "be sober." This is the opposite of being drunk.

I've seen enough drunk people in my life to know that those who are drunk have become sluggish in mind and body. People make stupid decisions when they are drunk. People are clumsy when they are drunk. As Peter here exhorts his readers to "be sober," he isn't merely speaking about abstaining from alcohol. The context here demands that this be talking about our minds, being "sober-minded" and "alert" and "watchful" or as the New American Standard translates, "keep sober in spirit."

Peter's saying, "Be aware of your surroundings. Know what's happening. Be active in your mind. Don't be sluggish in your thinking. Make sure that you are thinking correctly."

You can see this same intention in the other two places where this word is used here in 1 Peter. It occurs in chapter 4, verse 7, "The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober [spirit] for the purpose of prayer." Again, literally, the Greek word means "be sober" which is how the King James translates it. In other versions it has been translated "be self-controlled" (NIV) or "sober-minded." The New King James translates it "be watchful." The idea in this verse isn't merely that you aren't drunk so that you can pray. Rather the idea here is that your mind is fully under control and you are praying for God's help as the end of all things draws near.

The third place in which this word appears in 1 Peter is in chapter 5, verse 8, "Be of sober [spirit], be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Again the idea is the same. Peter isn't merely exhorting his readers to stay away from alcohol. He's exhorting them to a spiritual sobriety which knows how to resist the onslaughts of the devil which can be very subtle at times.

So getting back to chapter 1, verse 13, we see Peter's exhortations coming in the context of setting our hope upon the final day of grace. In order to do that we need to make sure that we stay away from all intoxicating influences upon their minds.

There are ways that we can intoxicate our minds with things that can distract us from what our minds ought to be thinking on. Just as a man who is drunk has come under the control of influence of alcohol so also there are things in this life that can influence our minds as well.

Primarily the danger comes with **obsession**. You may be obsessed with your favorite football team, your job, your favorite television show, earning money, your hobby, your exercise regimen, your computer, your books, your children's activities, or an assortment of other activities. These things can come so heavy upon your life that it becomes impossible to "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

But the danger can come with **distraction** as well. In order to be intoxicated, you don't only need to drink a lot of one type of alcoholic beverage. You can be intoxicated by drinking some beer and then some wine and then some hard liquor.

Likewise if there are enough little things in your life that add up you may not have any mind left to "set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." You have your children's activities here, your job responsibilities there, your house maintenance here, or your mother's health there. All of these things are good things. They aren't sinful in any way but add them all together and they may well intoxicate your mind by directing it to the things of this earth and away from what's needed. What's needed is a heavenly

gaze. If at all possible, don't make your life so busy that you don't have time to think of the eternal realities of the life to come. If you can't set your mind on the things to come then you have become intoxicated with the here and now.

Here's what I have found regarding distractions in this life. When trials come your way they often consume your mind to a greater degree than any of these things that I have already mentioned. When the finances are short it seems as if all of your thoughts are about the status of your bank account. When the relational conflict comes it seems as if all of your thoughts are about how to deal with the conflict. When your boss is coming down hard at work pressuring you to work even more hours it's upon your mind. When your marriage is turning sour it consumes your mind.

Yvonne and I have faced some trials in our life in which it seemed as if we were constantly talking about it. On several occasions we have even pledged to ourselves, "Let's not talk about it any more. It's dragging our mind away from what we ought to think upon." It is intoxicating us away from our true hope!

How can you face the trials of life? (3) Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, (1) by preparing your minds for action and (2) by keeping sober in spirit. May the Lord grant you the grace to do so.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 23, 2007 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/20/AR2007092000259.html>.

[2] The seed of this illustration came from an illustration given by Steve Leston in a sermon preached at Kishwaukee Bible Church on February 8, 2004 (see <http://www.kishwaukeebiblechurch.org>).

[3] I am indebted to John's Piper's observation of the intoxicating influence of the world in a message he preached on November 11, 1993. You can read the message here:
http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/4/855_Girding_the_Mind_to_Guard_Your_Hope/.