

Gird up the loins of your mind

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] We shall turn now to 1 Peter chapter 1, reading at verse 13. 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 13.

What for? Deared up the loins of your mind. Now one of the most important of all the doctrines of scripture, is the doctrine of man's total depravity.

And by total depravity, we mean that sin and corruption have affected every single area of our human nature and every single aspect of our human behaviour.

There is nothing in our humanity that has been left untainted by the fall of man.

We don't mean that men are devils, that all men are equally evil, or that all men are as evil as one day they shall be.

[1 : 27] We mean by total depravity, our pervasive depravity, one which affects the mind of man, the emotions of man, the affections of man, our relationships, even our very consciences themselves.

The light that is in us is darkness. And yet, by the mercy of God, the new birth, God's great act of renewal, is also total.

I don't mean by that that the new birth makes us sinless, or makes us perfectly holy. But I mean that the new birth affects every single aspect of our human lives.

God's renewal is as pervasive and as extensive as the corruption with which it is intended to deal.

The new birth affects the mind of man. It affects our emotions, our affections, our relationships, our consciences, our ambitions, our priorities, every single area of our human beings.

[3 : 03] And I think it's fair to say that as we look at God's church today, that great theological claim that the new birth affects every area of life, that claim is substantially underlined and borne out by observation and experience.

in the church of today, there is a good deal of feeling, a great deal of emotion.

And in the church of today, there is also a great deal of activity. we might even say that sometimes there is a surfeit of emotion and even sometimes a surfeit of activity or at least a surfeit of activism. it is fair to say that as we look at the worldwide church of God, we can see a very great emphasis upon the place of the emotions in religion.

I think that at least full justice is done to the importance of the feelings in all Christian piety.

[4 : 28] and I think too that justice is done at least in theory to the importance of practical Christian conduct.

but I've taken the word to this text tonight because I hold the conviction and I've long held the conviction that the greatest area of weakness in the church of today is in the area of the mind.

I believe that the intellect is at a discount and I believe that many of the problems of the worldwide church of Jesus Christ derive from that simple fact our disparagement of the role of the mind in religion our de-emphasizing of the intellect in the things of the spirit.

If I were asked well what are the symptoms of this disparagement of the mind I would point to two simple symptoms.

The first is this that as I look at the church of God I find so often that even men of outstanding ability men often of considerable gifts of intellect appear to leave those intellects behind them the moment they come to deal with religion and with the affairs of the church.

[6 : 26] Now I don't know how it is in this island I've been away too long but I know that on the mainland and in churches overseas there are by the grace of God large numbers of highly gifted men and women in the membership of all the churches.

and I know that these men and I mention the men especially because they are called upon to lead the church of God I know that these men are often highly successful in their own chosen careers

and I know that even in Scotland itself today some of the men in key positions some of the men at the very top of our professions are men of firm Christian conviction and they have gone to the top of those professions because in their daily callings they have used their minds they have used modern technology they have used modern methods of study they have used modern management techniques they have used modern methods of information gathering and information storage and so on they have applied their minds to the problems before them they will think those problems through logically and rationally they will try to eliminate all that is absurd all that is unreasonable they look at everything in the light of the intellect that God has given them and so often we have longed for those men to become more deeply involved in the affairs of the church of God and time and again they have become involved and won't see so often with sadness that those minds and those intellects and that logic and that reason that God gave them and which they apply so diligently in the work of their own callings that is left behind when it comes to deal with the problems of the church of God

I've sometimes seen some of the most brilliant professionals in the country and the moment they come into the church of God and its affairs these men so full of imagination and initiative in the secular world they refuse to apply those gifts in the sphere of religion they don't want to apply them to the affairs of the church so often in the church even with gifted men sentiment and caution take over men brilliantly innovative in their own professions and tremendously dedicated to the application of the mind in those particular areas they become so staid and so almost obstructionist when it comes to the problems of the church of God so I think it is imperative in the world of our day that we in the church should be wiser in our generation than are the children of darkness and we can only be so if those of you whom God has given minds are prepared to apply those minds to the church's business as you are to apply them to the business of the world outside and the second symptom is this the plea that one hears and one hears it constantly the plea for simplicity it's a plea which seems to me to have been echoing in my ears for twenty years everywhere one goes one is told keep it simple one is told we are not theologians how they are

Christians and yet not theologians I don't quite understand but that is the plea let us keep it simple one finds that at evangelistic conferences and on missionary occasions and I have a great deal of sympathy with the plea in that particular context we must stick to the great fundamentals of the faith and express them in the most lucid and in the clearest possible language but I hear the same plea from free church congregations I hear the same plea from students at university christian unions the same plea keep it simple and we live so often in dread in the pulpit we live in dread of being accused of being over people's heads and yet

I know that many of those same free church people are very gifted intellectually I know that those students those bright and often brilliant young people I know that they use their minds in the business of their secular calling it's one of the intriguing facts with regard to our own background that we seem to produce a succession of men with first class honours degrees in physics and that is the subject in the world today in which the discipline is most strenuous and the competition is most fierce and yet I am told in the proclamation of the unsearchable riches of Christ

[13:18] I am told that they haven't mastered the concepts that they haven't learned the language that they can't plumb those depths that they can't scale those heights I see in so many quarters the most appalling symptoms of impatience with theology and of impatience with doctrine and it frankly makes me tremble men plead for simplicity and the gospel that I have is one before which the apostle Paul stood in astonishment and said all the depth of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God how unset was judgment and his ways past finding out and that I put it to you that that is a valid assessment of the state of God's church today that so many many gifted men are not applying their minds in the sphere of religion and that in almost every quarter there is such tremendous pressure put upon the pulpit to keep the message simple and to keep the teaching in the virtual shallows of

Christian revelation but then of course there's this too that so often those who adopt this mentality imagine that they are thereby being so profoundly faithful to the inheritance to the heritage of their fathers peace and it is to me one of the great ironies of the modern world that Christians and above all Calvinists think that they have some interest in setting experience and feeling over against doctrine.

It seems to me one of the saddest things in the church today that we see ourselves as the heirs, not of the great scholarship of the early fathers and of the reformers and of the Puritans and of the great

19th century men who built our free church, men of outstanding intellect, including some of the most brilliant laymen in Scotland.

And we forget that that is our inheritance and we align ourselves so often with the theology of feeling and with religion of experience.

And I don't think we know where we belong. One of the great discoveries of my life was the discovery that the very, very essence of modernism was depreciation of the intellect and disparagement of the mind.

[16 : 59] G.K. Chesterton characterised the 20th century as the age of the suicide of thought. he said, modern man is at war with reason.

And J.G. Metschon, the outstanding Calvinist of this century in his great book, What is Faith? said, There is nothing more important for us of the Protestant tradition to instill in the hearts and minds of our young people than independence of mind.

And then, in the providence of God, I was led to look at what modernism was.

And I found in the great father of modern theology, I found the statement, Piety is feeling, religion is the feeling of independence, the feeling of absolute dependence.

And I have heard at evangelical churches time and time again that very same sentiment expressed, the sentiment that what we need is more feeling and what we need is more experience.

[18 : 42] And I have heard endless denunciations of theology and endless and countless disparagements of scholarship and innumerable dismissals of the relevance of thought to the life of the soul.

And I have felt often and often, do you people know, where these thoughts began and what these thoughts led to in 19th century Germany.

not only to the erosion of faith in the whole of Western Christendom, but in my humble judgment also to the appalling atrocities of two world wars.

Those men began to disparage doctrine. They began to disparage reason. They became mystics. They became feeling-oriented.

and today, today, today, today, it's no exaggeration to say that there is no difference in essence between what is said to be Christian worship and a discotheque.

[19 : 54] No difference at all. Because they're all on the same roundabout. they want feelings. They want euphoria.

They want blessing. They want exhilaration, ecstasy. They want to be taken out of themselves into some strange area where there is no intellect, there is no principle, there is no reason, there is only this feeling.

It may be drugs, it may be the disco, it may be sex or whatever, it may be sadism, but it's fulfilling that same role and I think that so much, even of so-called evangelical religion, belongs to that same framework.

It fits into man's pursuit of blessedness regardless of the truth. and yet I turn to the New Testament and what do I find?

Do I find it saying truth doesn't matter? Do I find it saying doctrine is of no importance? Do I find it saying keep the mind out of religion?

[21 : 13] Don't think, don't think because you may find questions, you may run up against problems you can't solve so don't think thinking is dangerous, scholarship is dangerous.

I find the New Testament this. I find a man who says I am the truth. I hear the Christ of God saying he is the truth and that surely is a monumental discovery that Christ is the truth.

it seems to me there is nothing that ever made me feel so much at home in the universe as that discovery. The discovery that there is no truth anywhere in the whole wide world.

no truth of mathematics no truth of psychology no truth of physics no truth of morality no truth of jurisprudence there is none of them that can contradict the truth as it is in Christ.

and I sometimes so envy the young who can make that discovery at a far earlier age than I did and who can live out their lives in the great excitement of this pursuit and all the tremendous assurance that all truth is Christ's truth and I find this too.

[22 : 47] I find Peter in this epistle beginning after his first great doctrinal section trying to bring the truth home and giving us practical Christian teaching and the very very first thing that Peter says is yield up the lines of your minds.

That is the very very first practical lesson of this epistle. It's a principle about the mind it's a challenge to all you Christians to be mentally and intellectually alert to bring your minds to bear upon the whole business of your own discipleship.

And how often do we find that same principle in the New Testament? Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.

The renewing of your minds. The mind matters. You remember Paul describing the whole armor of God in Ephesians 6 and the very first thing he says to them to be done is this.

having your loins girded about with truth. And that is the very first point in the armor.

[24 : 23] If we haven't got our loins girded and belted about with the truth then we're not equipped for this great warfare of the Christian life.

Your memory speaks to of the new man who was renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him. Now it seems to me that in the New Testament the mind is of enormous importance.

I don't mean at all that there must be no emotion. The New Testament is full of emotion. The joy of the spirit, the contrition of the penitent, these are great biblical emotions.

It's full too of emphasis, of sustained emphasis upon practical principles of daily conduct. It's concerned the way we ought to live.

I don't want to disparage feelings. I don't want to disparage practicalities. But I want to make a plea for the role of the mind.

[25 : 37] gird up the loins of your minds. And with this great privilege given to me by God tonight, with so many before me, whose discipleship and the providence of God is at so early a stage of its development, there is to me no more important fact for you to grasp than this, that your mind matters, and that you must use your mind, your reason, your powers of Christian thought and meditation.

These are absolutely vital to your development as Christian believers. Let me remind you of some areas where this is of enormous importance.

Take, for example, the question of Bible study. God tells us to search the scriptures. And it doesn't mean that we sit with the Bible and read and expect the power to infiltrate through the pores of our bodies in some super sensuous way.

In Hebrews 12 we are told that the scripture discourses, it reasons with us. You have forgotten the exhortation which discourses with you, which reasons and which argues.

And I think it's a great thing that the Bible is actually wanting to engage you logically. It wants to reason with you, it wants to argue with you.

[27 : 30] You only get the blessing as you grasp its meaning and you only grasp its meaning by the most diligent application of your minds to this greatness.

After all, what is the Bible? What is the Gospel of John? Those great verses of John's prologue in verses 1 to 18 of John chapter 1.

There is nothing more mind-stretching in the whole range of human literature on any subject whatsoever than the glorious words of that chapter.

Words of astonishing semantic simplicity in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and yet behind those beautifully simple words the unfathomable depths of the glory of the Triune God.

And I'm really asking you, has your mind ever engaged in discussion and in logical reasoning with those great words?

[28 : 47] things? I'm almost asking, does John's gospel belong to you? Have you engaged John's gospel? Have you reasoned with John's gospel?

Have you reasoned with Paul's epistle to the Romans? have you had a discussion between your mind and the great teaching of John in the Revelation?

We have to use our minds if we're going to grasp the meaning of the Word of God and take to the whole question of Christian witness.

You see we say we practical Christians we don't have time to read and time to meditate we are so busy witnessing. Well Paul was busy witnessing and John was busy witnessing and they still were contemplatives.

They were great meditatives and Christ was the product of the meditation of their contemplation and this very Peter says to us in the closing section of the same epistle Peter says to us be ready always to give to those who ask of you a reason for the hope that is in them that is in you.

[30 : 15] Give them a reason for the hope that is in you. How can I give a reason for my faith or for my hope if I don't know what my hope is and if I don't know the reasons for my hope it really is frankly impossible to bear witness unless we gird up the lines of our minds unless we can answer men's questions when men say to us tell us about Christ what do you Christians believe about Christ what do you believe about life after death where does this all go when it dies why do you believe in hell why do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ you need words you need arguments you need your minds you give a reason to those who ask you for the hope that is in you now it really is utterly absurd to imagine that we can be so busy witnessing that we have no time to see because we cannot witness unless first of all we know and unless we know why we know and take something else take the believer at a time of bereavement you remember how it was in 1st

Thessalonians 4 those Christians at Thessalonica they had been suddenly bereft and unexpectedly bereft of many other Christian friends and complainants in the world very distressed and very upset and what does Paul do Paul comes to those poor people with doctrine he says comfort one another with these words with words and you know they might have said just imagine that man our hearts were broken and he came with words but what mighty words they are he told them about the second coming of Christ and he told them that when Christ came the very first thing he would do would be to raise those who sleep in Jesus us I doubt if there are three words in any language more glories than these sleep not so much in us through

Jesus this tremendous reinterpretation of death because of what Christ did on the cross of Calvary because Christ is risen because he's coming again they are asleep they are asleep through Jesus blessed are the dead who die in the Lord he says to them look union with Christ this great mighty reality of our own living experience as Christians death doesn't destroy that union they are sleeping through Jesus and when he comes again the Lord will bring them with him and then he will raise us up and we shall be taken to be with the Lord in the air and then we shall all be together with the Lord a few short years of evil passed we reached that happy shore where death divided friends at last shall meet and part no more that's what Paul gave him he gave them comfort through words comfort through their minds and he said a wise man said once and I'm not being facetious but at all remotely humorous the best preparation for death is the knowledge of Greek grammar and the reason is quite simple because God has given us the story of a son and the great promises of the gospel he has given them to us in that language you know it's no use going to face death armed with courage armed with apathy armed with indifference armed with stoical defiance armed with armed is the word with the power of narcotics isn't it a mindless thing that the best preparation for death is words words of the living

God God's words about death God's words about life C.S. Lewis said in bereavement there is no earthly comfort you can stand at the open grave with all the cliches in the universe you can say don't worry you can say it happens to all of us you can say you had many good years you can say all of that and it's as effective as lead balloons because we need more than earthly comfort we need the comfort of God addressed to our minds we need to remember tonight where God's where God's people are we need to remember what

[36 : 37] God's people are like where they are we need to remember that one day we shall be together with them with Lord comfort one another with these words these words addressed your mind that's what the new testament is saying to us I'll take it somewhere else you remember the great picture of the disciples on the lake of Tiberias and there is a sudden squall as was common in those parts and the Lord is asleep in the prow of the ship and these disciples they are being swamped they're pitching and rolling and tossing and they're absolutely terrified and they awaken the Lord and the Lord says to them the Lord says where is your faith where are the doctrines that you believe here you are with me the indestructible son of

God and all the promises of God for human history are in this boat with you you know who I am you know what I am and yet where is your knowledge where is your belief why is it not applied in the present situation that's one of the most difficult lessons in the whole spiritual life to be able to remain cold enough at times of stress and times of tempest in our own lives to recollect the doctors that we believe you know there is a mildest possibility for me as a preacher that I can quote week in and week out for every human situation those great words of the apostle Paul God works all together for good to them that love him that's what God does and then one day my own personal situation becomes difficult and where is that verse gone now where is the faith where is

Romans 8 28 where the ship pitching and rolling and teething and tossing in the storm Romans 8 28 is still there but I haven't geared up the lies in my mind and I can't find it and I can't apply it and there is no comfort in the storm but the comfort of the promises of God you remember the mighty words of Psalm 46 be still and know know that I am God be still and know you see people say this theology business it has nothing to do with Christian living and yet here is God's word saying to us be still and know this man is living through times for the most tremendous of people and what he's saying to us all is be still and know know that I am God and this is the hand of God and the providence of God so you gird up the lines of your minds and let me say too that when in God's providence we are called upon to deal as elders and pastors and leaders of the church of God with all the problems of God's church that there again surely we have to gird up the loins of our minds love I would have to say to you that the great prosperity which you saw obvious and apparent before me tonight this marvelous numerical strength this tremendous depth of talent and all these tokens of God's blessing let them not blind us to the state of our land and our western civilization and indeed to the state of this island itself let's not forget the paradox that the church of God with all the power and all the force of truth and the indwelling of God's spirit is still suffering drifts and numerical loss that's a tremendous paradox and of course it's true that it's partly because God in sovereignty is withholding his blessing and I recognize that but am I going tonight to blame all the problems of the church to blame them on the sovereignty of God am I going to arraign predestination at the bar of judgment and say you are to blame for the state of God church in Scotland it seems to me but the very fairest comment to say that time and time and time again it is the church's own stupidity that has brought it to its present past that time and time again our behavior our administration our organization has been so unreasonable and so devoid of common sense that that is to blame for so many of our problems and that's why one of our greatest needs is to pray to

[42 : 27] God that those who lead the church would have wisdom from above wisdom to see problems wisdom to know the solutions to problems and the courage to apply the solution we are not going to survive by being less logical and more stupid than the world of business and the world of politics and the world of education we are the children of light God has promised us wisdom from above and we should ruthlessly apply that wisdom to all the problems before us in the church of our time and of our place well let me close with the three or four practical points and I have in mind again very much those whose discipleship is only beginning what will I say in terms of

Paul's spiritual principle geared up the lines of your minds I will say this first of all you steep yourselves in holy scripture you make sure that you know its contents from Genesis to Revelation you make sure that its great utterances are stored in your memory and available for instant recall I know that memory varies I also know that the memory can be cultivated and that everybody's memory could be infinitely better if it were more used I tell you this memory thrives on use you use it you get your mind full of the great text of the word of

God that's what Paul said to you know the whole armor of God you take the sword of the spirit which is the word of God now I think that today it is fair to say that the young Christians are not as conversant with the text of the Bible as I think there were 30 years ago I think there are reasons for that because so often we skip from version to version or we use versions which aren't all that suitable for memorization and I'm saying find your version whatever it's going to be that's not my present problem but what I'm saying is don't flip from one to the other get one and fill your minds it may be the Gaelic Bible or the King James version or the NIV I don't know but whatever it is live with it be absolutely saturated in scripture you know what Spurge said of Bunyan Bunyan he said is full of Biblin a Biblin whatever you preach him the Bible comes out that's what we ought to be having your loins stirred about with truth stirred up the loins of your minds you know even at an intellectual and at a cultural level there is nothing that can stimulate and that can plough up and enrich the life and soul of a man as a literal knowledge of the contents of the word of God so you will be full of the Bible and the second thing is you muster the great doctrines of scripture and the great doctrines of the creeds and confessions of the christian church muster them you should know what the trinity is and what predestination is and what justification is and what the atonement is and what the second coming is and what spirit baptism is you should know these things because they're part of the great teaching of the word of

God and they're things that you need you need to survive you need to witness you need to know those great doctrines and the third thing I say is this listen to the preach preaching I don't mean

simply attend preaching but listen to the preaching it's incredibly difficult today to be a preacher because modern communication techniques have given us a generation who are so unaccustomed to concentration I remember once upon a time in a series of talks and commercial radio they were to last 50 seconds and I made the astonishing discovery that a talk 50 seconds long was capable of inducing boredom people bored by 50 seconds of the

[47 : 50] Christian gospel know what we have instant communication visual communication through television computer monitors and so on advertising communication pictorial visual aids and all these things and from the very primary school upwards there is a disincentive to actually make an effort to listen and I have the impression sometimes that people are saying to the poor but make listen if you can but I don't think we can unless God's people are hungering and thirsting for the world unless they want the teaching and need the doctrine unless they're famished and parched and starving and yearning for the truth this preaching is a dreadful and a hopeless business because we cannot teach you without your wrong cooperation if you are determined to be bored if you want everything in pictures you know

I can't put the triumph of God in pictures there is no visual aid for the doctrine of the atonement none at all there are only words and you can teach you if you prepare to listen to actually switch on and engage your mind into this particular business and also discuss the truth further your minds with the Bible master the great doctors listen to the preaching and discuss the preaching now we do that far less than our forebears did and preaching loses half its value unless it is reflected upon and discussed and rumored upon by those who hear it and I tell you something else too that unless you can learn to hold your own in the cut and thrust of

Christian discussion in the bosom of a sympathetic Christian fellowship if you can't express your faith there if you can't defend your faith there if you can't argue there what will you do in that great and terrible world outside let's have discussion let's have all the generations mixed to discuss to listen to overhear the words of experience the insight of those who have gone before let's become expert in verbalizing God's word for ourselves let's learn to help one another to recall what they heard up the lines of your minds steep yourselves in scripture master the great doctrines listen to the preaching and discuss preaching and as we close just this be transformed by the renewing of your minds keep on being renewed it means of course that your mind is already born again that you have a new intellect with a different set of presuppositions and a different way of seeing things God has given you a new mind but you keep on renewing the mind one of the problems in education as many of you know such many children are in what is called cynical disengagement their minds of atrophy did they get to a certain point they mastered the alphabet or some elementary literary and numerous skills and they have frozen and how many many Christians are frozen their minds are frozen keep on being renewed there is no more stimulating quest for the human intellect than the quest of Christ this is life eternal to keep on getting to know thee the only true God and him whom he has sent never be content there is a divine spark of discontent keep on asking the questions keep on exploring keep on pushing against all the doors and say I am not content not to know I want to know what God's word says I want more and more and more of Christ as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby it is the same grand emphasis and then if you do that you have as a congregation and as an island so much to offer to this land of Scotland if you become masters of your own theological heritage then you can become also its disseminators may it please God that it shall be so let us pray O Lord we ask thee in thy grace to look down in pity upon all of us who are babes and children in the faith of our [53 : 45] Lord Jesus Christ so much to know so little time and so little aptitude in our own hearts for the great mysteries of thy gospel we bless thee Lord for our days of fellowship we commend one another to thee for thy glory sake Amen for a closing praise is psalm 72 the last three verses from verse 17 psalm 72 from verse 17 his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall the trueness effingham we sing to the end of the psalm each sur

Alleluia, say the Son is come.

Lent thou be blessed in heaven's tomb, O make us shall in hope.

Now blessed be the Lord the God, The God of Israel.

For He alone the glorious Lord, In glory of His Son, And blessed be His glorious name, To all eternity.

[56 : 09] The Holy Spirit is all eternal, Amen, so blessed be.

May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all, Now and forevermore. Amen.

And your faith there, If you can't argue there, What will you do in that great and terrible world outside? Let's have discussion.

Let's have all the generations mixed, To discuss, to listen, to overhear, The words of experience, the insight, Of those who have gone before.

Let's become expert in verbalizing God's word for ourselves. Let's learn to help one another to recall what they heard.

[57 : 19] Deep. ■■■ accepting Bible favorites in Bible Bible The integration of scripture, The reading of spiritual■■■ into the Bible, Fantastic book, The wisdom of life is what phenomenal world of renewed. It means of course that your mind is already born again, that you have a new intellect with a different set of presuppositions and a different way of seeing things. God has given you a new