

Lesson 10. **A clear mind** – 1 Peter 4:7.

“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray”. “Be ye therefore sober” (KJV); “Keep sane and sober for your prayers” (RSV); “you should therefore be calm, self-controlled men of prayer” (JBP); “lead an ordered and sober life given to prayer” (NEB); “you must be self-controlled and alert to be able to pray” (GNB); “Be earnest and thoughtful men of prayer” (LB).

From these other translations the NIV “clear minded” means sober, calm, ordered, alert and thoughtful. “Clear minded” (Greek SOPHRON, from SOZO to save and PHREN the mind) is to be of sound mind, self-controlled, temperate and discreet. The phrase elaborates on the renewed mind in Romans 12:2-3, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement”.

When you think of eye glasses people wear, in English the NIV phrase “clear minded” becomes graphically explicit. To be clear is to be distinct, to be sharp, to be focused. It is *not* scratched, hazy, finger-marked or blurred. We must always be asking ourselves, “How is our mind?”

Remember, it is the devil who blinds minds. Do not let him near yours!

Prepare your mind by filling it and exercising it with God's truth, 1 Peter 1:13.

We Christians must make our minds fruitful by thinking and speaking in understandable words, 1 Corinthians 14:14. We should keep our minds under the control of the Holy Spirit of God – not by letting them go but by cramming

them full of correctly interpreted and understood Scripture, Romans 8:6-7.

Why do all this? Because we are to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul *and with all your mind*”, Matthew 22:37.

Perhaps there are degrees of Christian maturity in love. There is emotional love, then devotional love and finally theological love? This is not intellectual love, but it is falling more in love with God as we learn more and more of who he is, what he does and what he wants from and for us.

Why is this clear mind so important for the Christian? Imagine verse seven is a sandwich, with a slice of bread on either side of the filling.

- Slice one: “The end of all things is near”
- The filling: a mind as keen as roasted beef with English mustard
- Slice two: “So that you can pray”

Christians need spiritually sharp and focused minds in view of the hour (the end is near), and in view of our hope (we can pray intelligently).

Because some Christians have not sanctified and stimulated their minds to be 100% for God and his word they find it difficult to test whether things are genuinely from God or not.

In later times “evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you (Timothy), continue in what you have learned and become convinced of, because you know those from who you

have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures ...”,
2nd Timothy 3:13-14.

Some Christians think it is wrong – somehow unspiritual – to use their minds!

Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758 in U.S.A. wrote:

- “The glory of God is a higher goal than human happiness. Human understanding of the world depends upon God’s ordaining that the human mind could grasp the nature of things God is the source of reality; God is the source of truth; human intellect and the world itself are always dependent on him”.
- “Only a heart changed by God’s grace can properly understand itself, God, and the world of nature, and the proper potential of human existence”.¹

In other words, a Christian mind is the only mind that can view the things of this world and the things of the Bible (God’s word) *in the correct perspective*. We must not lose the immense advantage God has given us by carelessly giving our thinking over to someone other than God! Do not even let other Christians do all your thinking for you. We must individually think deeply about God. Think deeply about God’s word. And think deeply about God’s world. God’s will is that we live God’s way in his world. Why? “Because the end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray”, 1 Peter 4:7.

¹ quoted by Mark Knoll [The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind](#) (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press) page 78.

While Peter wrote this letter Roman Emperor Nero was persecuting Christians. Peter guessed he may not survive much longer. He knew time was limited. But on his mind was *the essential development of a Christian mindset*. That alone would withstand Nero's onslaught. Nobody knows how near the end of time is. It is a secret locked up in God's safe keeping. But we do know that the end is near because he has told us. We desperately need a Christian mindset.

Peter was among the twelve disciples commissioned by Jesus in Mathew 10. After the talk about preaching, healing, casting out demons and living financially by faith come warnings. There are warnings about betrayal, opposition and persecution. There is encouragement to fear God more than any man or any human authority. **Death in this world is only entry into the reality of Heaven's glory after all!**

Tucked away in Matthew 10:38 is this principle: "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me". To Peter, our author and one who personally heard Jesus say this, "taking the cross" meant the following:

- carrying a heavy burden, the cross beam
- soon facing an inevitable death; the crucifixion
- facing close and hurtful public scorn
- feeling the shame of being exposed to public gaze
- leaving loved ones behind

By the time Peter wrote Jesus had gone to his own cross. It was not because of his own crimes (for he was perfect). It was because of the sin of all the rest

of humankind. Peter had seen Jesus on trial, and in the city streets struggling to bear his cross. He ultimately saw him nailed to that cross. Then he had also seen the empty tomb and later, stunningly, the risen Christ three days afterwards.

Peter wrote by way of explanation, “Therefore, since (Jesus) Christ suffered in his body, arm yourself also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body has done with sin”, 1 Peter 4:1.

What was Jesus’ attitude to the cross? He knew it was coming. He chose not to avoid it, because he knew it was God’s will. His mind kept his body on the cross when Satan presented opportunities through the mockers to chose a more spectacular path! “Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God”, Matthew 27:40, Mark 15:30. It was because he was the Son of God that Jesus stayed on the cross!

What type of attitude do we display in our lives? Do our minds keep our bodies on course for honouring God? There are **three evidences of a clear mind, controlling a Christian life, in 1 Peter 4.**

Firstly, **a clear Christian mind learns to take on hardship**, verse 12-13. We have already seen verse 1. Verses 12-13 say, “Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed”.

Some chocolates or cakes are surprisingly soft on the inside. Do not be a soft, earth-centred Christian, seeking blessings in this world. Rather be a solid, heaven-centred Christian, with a theology of suffering. This means being done with sin, verse 1, and living for the will of God, verse 2.

Secondly, **a clear Christian mind learns to leave the world's ways behind**, verses 2-5. "You have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans chose to do ..." "They think it strange that you do not plunge with them ...". We must not be earth-experience centred Christians. We should be eternal reward-in-heaven centred Christians! Consider our Lord Jesus, who for the joy he knew was set in front of him, endured the cross, Hebrews 12:2.

Thirdly, **a clear Christian mind loves God and his people dearly**, verses 8-11. "... Love covers a multitude of sins. ... Offer hospitality ... use (your) gifts to serve others ... speak ... serve ... so that in all things God may be praised". We should aim to be *giving* Christians not *getting* Christians.

As one last example of what 1 Peter 4:7 means, carefully read through Matthew 26:36-46. Jesus knew that his earthly life was near its end. His purpose was being fulfilled.

What did he do? He took Peter, James and John to the Garden of Gethsemane. From deep sorrow and anguish of heart he prayed.

What did he pray? He prayed that he would keep his life dead centre of God's track for his life. "Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will", Matthew 26:39.

Jesus willingly took the way of the cross, fully knowing what he was doing. He did the Father's will. Individually, we take up our cross when we accept God's will for ourselves. And when we accept it just as Jesus accepted the will of his Father. We know it may involve pain, hurt, misunderstanding and rejection. But because we love God, we choose to obey him.

In this way we should take up the cross in relation to

- our personal attitudes
- our own ambitions
- every activity in life
- our associations with other people

We cannot pray effectively if we are living in sin. God only hears prayers – except for prayers of repentance – from a sanctified life. “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray”.