

Gird Up The Loins Of Your Mind!

Joe Slater

I can't remember anyone ever telling me to gird up my loins! What is the point, then, of that expression in the five times it is found in the New Testament?

In first-century Palestine, people wore loose, flowing clothes which made running and other activities difficult. (Imagine competing in a race while wearing your floor-length bathrobe!) So, before starting to run, they tied (girded) their clothes close to their bodies with a belt (girdle – not an undergarment to compress the abdomen, but a belt or sash to secure loose clothing). John the Immerser, for example, “*was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt (girdle) around his waist (loins)*” (Matt. 3:4).

Jesus told His disciples, “*Let your waist (loins) be girded and your lamps burning*” (Luke 12:35). Both the girded waist and the burning lamp are metaphors for being prepared! Jesus was speaking of His return to judge the world. Get ready now! When He returns, it will be too late to prepare.

Peter likewise exhorted his readers to be ready for the coming of Christ, not by tying up loose clothing, but by girding up the loins of their minds (1 Pet. 1:13). Do we face any bigger challenge than controlling our minds? Perhaps this is why Paul, as he listed the pieces of a Christian's armor, wrote of “having girded your waist (loins) with truth” (Ephesians 6:14). A soldier's armor would benefit him but little if his clothing was flapping about, hindering him from movement. Just so, if a Christian's mind is out of control, every aspect of him will be ill-prepared for a life of service or for the Lord's return.

Gird up the loins of your mind!

Don't Be Ichabod's Namesakes

With a title like that you might think that I am going to discuss Ichabod Crane, the fictional character in Washington Irving's short story, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. And we could easily make some analogies to his life in the story – like don't be a scaredy-cat.

But I want to talk about the Ichabod in the Bible. Did you know there was someone named Ichabod in the Bible? No? Well, there was. Since we don't know anything about him, let's talk about his name.

First, some background from 1 Samuel 4. Israel was at battle against the Philistines (v. 1). Eventually the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant (v. 11). A messenger then brought word to Eli of Israel's defeat, the capture of the ark, and the death of his sons (v. 12-17). When poor old Eli heard this news, he fell off his bench, broke his neck, and died (v. 18). Eli's daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, who was pregnant, went into labor at this news (v. 19-20). Before dying, she named her son Ichabod. She gave the reason of her name choice: because “the glory has departed from Israel” (v. 21-22).

You see, Ichabod in Hebrew means “no glory.” Now you can see why I said in the title that we are not to be Ichabod's namesake. To be such would be to bring no glory to God. So don't be an Ichabod. Give God glory in all that you say and do!

“*Give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name*” (Psalm 29:1-2)

--Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY)

DEAD UNTO SIN

Bradley Wright is a sociology professor at the University of Connecticut. He admits to having that common problem of overdoing certain behaviors. It is not a sin to eat an occasional dish of ice cream, but he found himself eating too much, too often. He tried to practice moderation, but it did not work. Then he made an interesting discovery. He explains it this way,

“**In actuality, abstention is usually easier than moderation.**”

“How can this be? As I understand how the brain works, it loses neural connections underlying a behavior once we stop doing that behavior. Use it or lose it. Moderation keeps brain circuits active. Abstention lets them atrophy.” (Quote taken from an email newsletter, emphasis is in the original.)

It is easier to give up a harmful or dangerous behavior completely than it is to practice it in moderation. If we attempt to cut back on sin, we keep the neural connections that cause us to desire it alive, and there is virtually no chance of success. If we consider ourselves “*dead unto sin*” (Rom 6:11) the connections begin to atrophy, and we have a much better chance of success.

Too many of us are trying to walk the tight rope, or to skirt the edge of the canyon. Instead we should be getting as far away from sin as possible. We should “*put to death therefore what is earthly*” in us (Col 3:5). We should “*make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires*” (Rom 13:14).

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)