

Prepare Your Defense

1 Peter 3:13-17

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:13-17 (ESV))

This message today is entitled, "Prepare Your Defense", because at the heart of this portion of scripture are the words in verse 15 that read,

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. (1 Peter 3:15 (ESV))

These blessed words are like so many other ones within the pages of this Bible, words that I have read over and over again, so many times, but with each reading, I have missed out on much of the real depth and significance of their meaning. And that is why I have been emphasizing to us over and over again recently that each of us needs to be spending more and more time reading and studying through these scriptures, "meditating" on their meaning, literally "chewing" on every word, else we will surely miss out on some very, very important "secrets of the kingdom of God" that are hidden within the depths of them.

But why does God do it this way? Why does He intentionally limit some people's ability to understand His words, His ways, His precepts, sometimes temporarily, sometimes for all eternity. I confess to you that I don't fully know. But I do know that He does! He spoke about that in Matthew 13 when He explained to His disciples the meaning of His "Parable of the Sower". Listen to those words!

¹⁰ Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (the other people, such as the Scribes and the Pharisees) ¹¹ And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." (Matthew 13:10-11 (ESV))

Those are odd words for our evangelical minds to understand and accept. But they are nonetheless the words of the Lord Jesus, and He is Holy, and He is always "good" in all that He does. And I trust His judgment. So then, though I don't fully understand His

purposes, His decision to sometimes limit for a while, or even for an eternity the understanding of the “secrets of the Kingdom” to only the few that He chooses, needs to be alright with me.

And folks, there are so many, many “secrets of the Kingdom” that are cloaked within the words of these scriptures, ready to be opened and understood, but again only by those who have been given that privilege by God’s Holy Spirit. And I want to invite you, each of us, to pursue after and to be some of those special ones who can read and hear and know God’s secrets.

And we actually have some of those secrets right here within these words that we are studying today. So let’s take take this opportunity to dig one level deeper into the depths of these particular words.

Concerning this verse 15, let’s begin by asking the right questions, those being, “What is this special kind of “Hope” spoken about here. And then, why and when and under what circumstances would you or I have need to “defend” our reasons for having such “hope”?” Verse 15 again,

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.
(1 Peter 3:15)

So then, what is this special kind of “hope” that is spoken about here? It is “hope” that is borne out of a need that is present within every soul to believe and to trust that there surely must be more to this life than simply these meaningless pursuits that so consume our minds and our efforts every day, pursuits that while giving some immediate gratification provide nothing of eternal value for our soul and our spirit.

And then beyond that “hope” is the “hope” that when the days of this life are over, then there must be something more than our just returning, body, soul and spirit, back to the dust from whence we came.

And folks, without this kind of “hope”, a person will simply waste away the moments of their life, accomplishing nothing of real value, and only going from depression to depression.

And so, in God’s great mercy and grace, He lovingly put a remedy into every soul, a beginning deposit of this wonderful gift of “hope”. And for those of us who have grabbed hold of its promises and have pursued after its blessings, we have become

different people from what we once were, so different that those who observe us are “stirred up” to ask us “why” we are different, “why” we have this special “hope” within us.

And that is why we are commanded here to then be ready with an answer, a “defense” for this “hope” that is within us. And that defense needs to be a good and a proper defense, one that is founded upon and supported within the pages of this Book.

And as these words tell us, you and I need to be “prepared” ahead of time to know and present that defense. And the question is, “Are you prepared right at this moment?” If I were to be so bold as to call your name and ask you to stand and give a defense of the hope that is within you, would you be confident in your presentation?

I do fear that most of you would not, and that would be so with most every church member in every congregation. Yes, we have spent many years sitting in our church pews, hearing and soaking up the truths that we have heard. But are we ready to speak them back out again, and especially to speak them back out in ways that are appropriate to the person and to the circumstance involved?

Again, I do fear not, but may I encourage us that we do now have the opportunity to make ourselves ready for that defense. And we really do need to get about it.

Where then must our preparation of our defense begin? It must begin with the full assurance that what we believe and the hope that we have within us really are based on truth and have the authority, the power and trustworthiness of a source that is beyond our own and beyond any other man, the strength and might and power and holiness and righteousness of the Almighty God.

And no, not everyone wants to recognize and accept that God is an acceptable source of authority, but that is not really relevant to our defense, because, just because someone doesn’t want to accept God as being God does not make God any less God.

And so then, God Himself and these scriptures that He has given to us must be our source of proof, our only source.

And in them we immediately find that the foundation and the substance for all the special “hope” that we have within us is founded solely upon the “Person and the work” of Jesus Christ, and upon none other than Him, whether it be the salvation that cleanses us and redeems us from our sin, or it be the eternal life that He and He alone provides to all who receive Him, it is Jesus who is the foundation for all our “hope”.

And as part of our preparation, we must ask the question, “Why is that so? Why and how can it be that these precious benefits can come only through the Person and work of Jesus Christ?” “Is there not more than one way to get to heaven?”

And although we know that the answer to that question is NO, that there are no other ways. We need to be prepared with such scriptures as Acts 4:12, which tells us that “There is no other name given under heaven by which we shall be saved”, and that is Jesus and Jesus alone!

And “why” would that be so? It is because Jesus, though being a man, was not just a man. He was God, truly “God”. And as God, He possessed all authority and power to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And by coming to earth and dying on the cross, He gave His life a ransom and paid all the penalty that we owed for our sins. And now we can believe that we are saved to the uttermost, and that we will enjoy life eternal with Him in heaven.

But not only that, this “hope” that we have within us includes within its promises that as we await our entrance into heaven, we also have the assurance that nothing can separate us from God and from the “hope” that we have in Him. Listen!

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 (ESV))

This folks is the “hope” that I have. And my “hope” is real and it is eternal! And I am convinced of it all. And I want to be ready to say these words that I have just said to you the very next time that I am put on the spot to “defend this hope that I have within me”. And I want you to be prepared also!

May I take the last few minutes that we have together today to help us think through when and under what circumstances those opportunities might present themselves, when we will be put on the spot. Our scripture verse again, verse 15 . . .

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. (1 Peter 3:15)

Sometimes, those who might ask us such questions about our hope are only making casual conversation. And while that is not often the case with such serious matters as “hope in Christ”, it does sometimes take place. But even then, we must be ready with

an appropriate response. Who knows, the Holy Spirit might take that casual question, along with our prepared answer and then lead that person down a path to salvation.

More likely though, a question of this nature will come to us from an already sincere “seeker” of God’s word, and that is when we should be well prepared to give a good answer of an evangelical nature, again, an answer that might lead the one who is asking to actually pray to receive Christ as their Savior.

But even more likely, the context of these words suggest that a far more challenging circumstance will be facing us, one in which we find ourselves under some sort of pressing confrontation, and that is when it would be especially good and right if we had an immediate but well-prepared response.

May I give us one additional word of encouragement. And that encouragement comes from a statement made by Jesus when He was speaking about circumstances such as the one we just mentioned. In Luke 12 Jesus said,

¹¹ "When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (Luke 12:11-12 (NASB))

These words might seem to be telling us that we really don’t have to be prepared ahead of time with all the right words, but not so! You and I need always to remember that one such statement within these scriptures does not create a doctrine that is to be followed in every circumstance of life. And that is so in this matter. We know that to be so because we are admonished over and over again in other places in these scriptures to study them, to learn them, to seek after and to pursue the knowledge and wisdom within them, and on and on.

So, when the Lord Jesus tells us in these words to not be worried about what we will say when we are brought before the magistrates, He is simply reassuring us that if we have not had opportunity to fully prepare ourselves regarding a particular matter, or for certain particular questions that our accusers might ask, it is then that God’s Holy Spirit will be faithful to provide us with all the additional answers we will need.

I’ll close for now and hope to continue these thoughts next week. But may I encourage you to be prepared. I invite you to take the notes from this message and use them as a beginning point. Use whatever means you need, but please do be “prepared to give a defense for the hope that you have within you”! Verse 15 . . .

¹⁵ . . . in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.
(1 Peter 3:15)