

FIRST PETER 3:13-15a "Apologetics Is Never Having To Say You're Sorry"

Last week we saw how Peter encouraged the saints to seek God and to live with one another in a way that glorifies the Lord.

1PE 3:8-9 "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

The idea of blessing others is connected to our being blessed by God Himself. When we understand what we've inherited by faith in Christ then we begin to approach life from an eternal perspective. We begin to see with the eyes of the Spirit, who enables us to supernaturally deal with people in the Spirit, so that we don't operate in the flesh, but according to God's will in His power.

This is what I shared last week when borrowing from Dr. Hiebert's commentary on Peter as he quoted Kenyon who said, "When Christianity calls upon us to do what does not seem humanly possible it shows us its genius -- supernaturalism. Peter, of all men, should know what the grace of God had done for him in this respect. He had not only been fast with the sword; he had been quick with his tongue."

It's not easy living in this world when we're tempted to act one way according to the flesh, and yet God has called us to live according to the Spirit. The good news is that God never asks us to do anything that He doesn't enable us to do. But we must be willing to humble ourselves before Him and obey His will instead of seeking our own way.

I know that the easier path is to operate in the familiar, which is to say that we've often spent so much time dealing with life in a sinful, selfish way, apart from God, that when we do come to faith in Christ it's hard to get out of the mode of how we used to live. But we must remember that we are new creatures in Christ and we have been called to a high calling to represent our God faithfully in this world.

Paul puts it very succinctly in 1TH 4:7 "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

Living a holy life is not meant to ruin all of our fun, it's meant to give us the opportunity to show the world that we belong to God and that they may too.

Should we fear living this kind of holy life? Well, Peter felt that some of those people he was addressing may have felt this way.

1 Peter 3:13 ¹³ Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?

The implication is that if we spend our time pleasing God with our lives it will carry over to real life and as we bless others, doing good unto them, we won't have to fear that most people will want to retaliate for being treated right.

Notice that the question Peter asks is rhetorical. The answer is implied in the question. "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" The implied answer is no one.

Most people respond favorably to kindness and compassion. In fact Solomon understood that even your enemies will respond to being treated right.

PRO 16:7 "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him."

Paul posed a similar line of thought to the Christians in Rome.

ROM 8:31 "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?" Again, the implied answer is no one.

But here's where some Christians lose sight of the sinfulness of man's heart. And as a result of this they confuse the norm with very real exceptions to the norm. The thinking goes something like this: I'm a child of God; God is for me therefore no one can be against me, therefore nothing bad can happen to me.

Or they'll take this verse in 1Peter and conclude that since the implied answer to the question, "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?", is always no one, they are surprised and confused when someone doesn't respond with the same kindness which was given by you.

Because when we come to verse 14 we see Peter deals with the reality of man's sinful heart.

1PE 3:14 "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."

Is Peter contradicting himself between verse 13 and 14? No! He's simply saying that as we seek to do good to all people, most people, most of the time, will respond in a positive way. However, there are exceptions. They may be few and far between, but they may exist.

Dr. Kistemaker puts it this way: [Peter] "is teaching the readers that if they suffer physically or mentally for Christ's sake, they will not lose, because God does not forsake them. This is what Peter meant in 1Pet.2:20-21... "If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called....."

No one likes to be abused, especially when we've done nothing wrong. We cry, foul! But simply because a part of life doesn't seem fair does not mean that God is unfair. In fact as we saw in 1PE 3:12 "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer...."

That doesn't simply mean that He always sees us and knows what we're doing. It means that nothing happening in our lives escapes His notice or His concern or His desire to use it to teach us.

He's very aware of even injustices in our lives and He's there to comfort and strengthen us in the midst of those times and to enable us to always look to Him as the God who will never leave us or forsake us.

I'm reminded of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These three men were Jews who were pressed into service for King Nebuchadnezzar. But some of the Kings' servants didn't like these three Jews and they plotted to get rid of them. They created a law which the King signed, that all people must bow down and worship the image of the King. If anyone failed to do this they were put to death.

Well, they knew these three Jews worshipped only the One true God and they would not bow. It was then brought to the attention of the King and in DAN 3:14 we read, "and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?"

DAN 3:16-18 "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

These three knew that God was with them and that He was more than capable of delivering them. But they also knew that if He chose not to, for any reason, they were still going to be faithful to their God. They knew man may destroy the body, but no one can destroy their souls which would be united to God by faith.

If anyone should have been afraid, it should have been these three Jews. But you see, they understood what Peter talks of here in verse 14, "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." Or as the NAS puts it, "Do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled."

That may be easier said than done, but in the time anyone is called upon to suffer in such a way God's grace will be sufficient.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were operating in the Spirit when they responded to the King. No one can face the flames any other way. And we know God was with them because when they were put into the flames God did deliver them and a fourth person was seen in the flames with them. That fourth person was Christ Himself.

Now you and I look at that scene and we're tempted to say, well, sure it was easy for those three Jews to go into the flames, they were delivered. But remember, they had no idea they were actually going to be delivered. They hoped in God whether they died or not.

By the way, Peter says in verse 13 that if you are eager to do good..." The idea here is that we shouldn't approach our service to God half-hearted. The word eager in the Greek is a word that can be translated zealots. This is why the NAS uses the word zealous. Often times our service to God can be anything but zealous.

This doesn't mean that we'll always be these perky little people who have a permanent smile embedded on our faces and that we never have a problem in the world. But it does mean that when the

going gets tough we don't quit. With a zeal that we seek from God we move on toward the prize that God has set before us.

William Barclay quoting Sir John Seely says, "No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue safe which is not enthusiastic." And then Barclay comments: "It is only when a man falls in love with goodness (desiring to please God) that the wrong things lose their fascination and their power."

What happens so often in our lives is that we have a mixed allegiance. It may be an allegiance to the world and God; it may be an allegiance to our former lives and God. God says we can't serve two masters. Only as we place our King on the throne of our hearts, and with a zeal and passion, as we put Him foremost in our lives, will the things of this world grow strangely dim and not seem as important as our love and loyalty to our God.

Peter understood this when he continues in verse 15 "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,"

What Peter is saying is that even if you experience things in life which are not wonderful, including being persecuted for your faith unjustly, you are still to be Christ's witness both in word and deed. It's a privilege we should not take lightly simply because our situation in life doesn't seem to be ideal.

If you and I wait for our situations in life to be ideal before we serve God with zeal, we may never get off first base. It's true our ability to serve God may be limited because of our situation, but it should never be used as an excuse to drop out of life and tell God that we'll catch Him later when He fixes everything to our liking.

The apostle Paul served when he was a free man and yet, precisely because he was put in jail, we have some of the letters we do in the Scriptures. He didn't stop serving because it was inconvenient to be a Christian.

Look what Peter says in our text. 15 "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,"

He's been encouraging these Christians in their plight. He understands how difficult it was for them. He doesn't overlook

that but he then says that despite how difficult things are set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts.

In other words, focus on the One who's given you eternal life. The NKJV and the NAS use the word sanctify instead of setting apart. But the idea is identical. The point here is to separate yourself unto the Lord for His use. It's hard to be useful for Christ when we've set ourselves outside of His will, or outside of the realm of being a servant for Him.

Notice what Peter says here in verse 15. He's saying that we must sanctify Christ in our hearts as **Lord**. As I've mentioned before the word Lord in the Greek is *kurios* and means supreme in authority. Peter is asking, is Christ the Supreme One in your life where it shows in obedience to Him?

To call Christ Lord and not follow Him is to misunderstand what it means for Him to be Lord. The designation Lord is reserved for only One person and that's God Himself. Are we loving Christ as the God He is or are we loving Him only when it's convenient?

All of us fall short here. But we need to realize that a passion, a zeal for our Lord is not dependent on what's going on around us. It's dependent on knowing that we deserved nothing from God and yet He's given us His infinite grace and mercy and He gave us His only begotten Son to die for the penalty for our sins.

It's realizing that we belong to Him by faith in Christ. When you dwell on His love for you, your love for Him will grow. And even in the midst of suffering and trials Peter tells his readers to always be ready to love and serve the Lord as they serve and love the world with the truth which can set them free from the penalty of sin.

"Always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.." NAS

Here's an area which can really freak a lot of people out. You mean I may have to open my mouth for Christ and give people the Gospel? Yeah. Now this doesn't mean that every time you open your door or leave your house that you have to corral someone and give them the Gospel.

What Peter specifically says here is that if someone asks you about your faith you need to be willing and able to give them an answer regarding the hope you have in Christ.

And by the way, as I taught earlier in this series, (specifically 1Peter 1:3-5 parts One and Two that you can go back and read, http://www.growupinchrist.com/images/docs/1Peter/1Peter_1_3-5_13_part1.pdf --- http://www.growupinchrist.com/images/docs/1Peter/1Peter_1_3-5_13_part2.pdf), I point out what this hope entails and why this hope is so important in having the proper understanding of where we came from and where we're going in Christ.

It is this hope, via the gospel message of being reconciled back to the Father through faith in the crucified, resurrected and ascended Christ, that we must be able to articulate. Without this hope a faith in Christ is essentially relegated to fire insurance.

Without this hope being demonstrated in our lives as we rejoice in Christ few people will be asking us about it since it will be something that is not very attractive and thus there won't be a need to make a defense of this hope.

When your hope is based on a sure promise from the faithful Creator God and Savior then that hope will produce a ground-swell in your life that cannot be contained as Paul points out when writing to the Romans.

^{NAU} **Hebrews 6:18** so that 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. ¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, ²⁰ where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Just as Christ is the forerunner for us in such a way as He has been invited to stand at the right hand of the Father who has promised Him the inheritance, we too, as those who run behind have the same assurance that we will reign with Him in His kingdom.

This is why our hope goes well beyond simply believing that our sins have been atoned for by Christ, but atoned for with a specific goal in mind and that goal is spelled out by Peter and Paul as is found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ who will one day return

on the last day in the same way as He was taken up forty days after His resurrection.

And this last day will be the first day of the realization of our inheritance where faith and hope gives way to reality, even as the entire creation waits for this day of deliverance.

Romans 8:19-25 ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

This is our hope and this hope can only be found in the message of hope that can only be found in the One who is our hope, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But, what I have found over the years, regarding Christians wanting to share their faith, is that they may be willing, but they don't seem to be able to give people the Gospel in a way that makes sense, together with the hope that is attached to it.

Or someone may have the biblical knowledge to give to someone but they don't seem willing to give it away. What Peter is encouraging us to do is to have both the willingness, as we sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, and the ability, to make a defense.

The NIV says "be prepared to give an answer". Both the NKJV and the NAS use the word defense. The Greek word used here is *apologia* and it means to give an account. It's where we get our English word Apology. But when we think of apology we usually associate it with saying we're sorry for something.

And the way some people give the Gospel it sounds more like we're sorry we have to say something rather than really giving them an account of the hope and truth of God's word. This is also where we get our Theological term apologetics. Apologetics is the

discipline of putting into words what we believe based on the objective truth of God's word.

And so Peter is saying *apologio* them. Give an account of the truth as it has been given to you. And understand that this account is what gives you hope for eternity. That should be real motivation.

Okay, so now you're motivated. How do you give this account? Well, unless you have the gift of evangelism and you're prompted to want to go out your front door and corral the first person you see, you will most likely be given the opportunity as someone is curious about your faith as they see you living it out.

It could be something as natural as a co-worker, for instance, asking why you don't behave like the rest of those at work. It could be a neighbor curious as to what church you go to. It might be a friend asking for prayer because they know you're a Christian. Now simply because a door is open doesn't mean you'll get that particular opportunity to give someone the gospel.

What Peter is addressing is a Christian who may be approached in a confrontational way to explain why they believe what they do. After all in the first century if you weren't a good Pagan or a good Jew there just wasn't another alternative. And people wanted to know why you would be different. In some cases it was curiosity, in others it was being indignant that you would leave the practices of your forefathers.

Peter says, be ready for any situation which gives you an opportunity to be Christ's witness. But let's say someone does want to hear about what Jesus has given you. What do you tell them? Well, you might start off with how He's given you hope and given you new direction for life and how wonderful it is be in fellowship with other believers.

And yet, as wonderful as that is, that is not *aplogia*, giving an account of the facts which gave you this hope. What are the facts? Well, whatever they are they should be given intelligently and coherently so that someone else may make a decision based on the facts, not on an emotional appeal.

I've written a tract called, "So, what is Christianity all about?" And the reason I've written this is to help people make an intelligent decision for Christ. I've also found that it is useful for Christians to glean from, so that they have some direction regarding what information to give to people.

Now, I've found over the years that I may not share the Gospel the same way twice. But what I've always striven to do is to give them the same biblical truth every time. For example I may not share the same way with a Mormon as I would with a Roman Catholic.

I may not share the same way with a relative as I would with a stranger. The personal testimony may be different but the Gospel always remains the same. So, what is the Gospel? Well, keep in mind that the word Gospel means good news.

But to have good news, it is inferred that there is bad news. We'll take a look at both. What I'd like to do this morning is to give some basic truths you can share with people who want to know about your faith.

Truth #1)

God is God. He makes the rules because He is creator. Because He is creator all must bow to Him. In the Garden of Eden man was commanded to love God as he bowed to his creator. As he walked with God there was life and the promise of eternal fellowship.

Along these lines God set down one simple rule.

Gen.2:15-17 "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Man chose to rebel and he, along with his wife, ate and they died spiritually and would eventually die physically.

Truth #2)

Man was cut off from fellowship with His creator because of willful disobedience. By the way, this is what death implies. It is a cutting off. Cutting off spiritually in the sense that fellowship is broken with God, as the relationship turns from friend to enemy, and a cutting off from the body where the spirit of man and his physical body are separated from one another as the physical body dies.

Because of Adam and Eve's disobedience sin entered into the world and we too, like them, now have a sin nature which is in rebellion to God by our very natures. A verse to substantiate this

as we're making our *apologia*, our defense, would be 1CO 15:22
"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

Paul gives us another verse regarding sin and its effects.

ROM 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Truth #3)

Hope in God. After Adam and Eve were cut off because of their sin God gave a promise of restoration through an atoning redemption. When speaking to the devil who tempted the man and woman God said this.

Gen.3:14-15 "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

This was a promise of One who would vanquish the enemy and the curse he brought upon mankind. This hope was given to many throughout the O.T., from Abraham to David. And throughout the O.T. the message was the same; someone who is blameless must stand in man's place and pay that penalty he owes to God for his sin. That penalty is death.

We see God's institution of the lamb, who was slain in Egypt, as its blood was placed on the doorpost. As the angel of death saw the blood which the Israelites placed there, by faith in God, he passed over those households. We know this as the Passover. But the central figure was the lamb slain to deliver from death.

Truth #4)

The promise made to Adam and Eve called for a Redeemer. The blood of lambs and goats were continually being sacrificed. However, their blood was not the agent through which God would ultimately forgive sin. Since man sinned against God a man had to die. But not just any man. This man had to be like the proverbial lamb without blemish.

No perfect man was available since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God according to Rom.3:23. Only God Himself could solve this dilemma and still satisfy His Divine justice. And

so He chose to come into this world and take on flesh and pay our penalty Himself.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born a baby in Bethlehem. But Jesus is very God, in fact John tells us this in His Gospel.

JOH 1:1-3,14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

This promise given to Adam and Eve in the Garden found its fulfillment in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But Christ's actual redemptive work is Truth #5) Jesus lived that perfect life and then took our place on the cross as He paid the penalty for sin we deserved. He committed no sin and yet He took our sin.

Paul put it this way in 2CO 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

As Jesus Christ hang on that cross for you and me He took our penalty and the curse of sin which kept us from peace and fellowship with our Creator. And with His death He paid our penalty in full. The wrath of God that we deserve fell upon our Lord Jesus that day on Calvary some 2,000 years ago. But that's not the last truth.

Truth #6)

Jesus is still God and He is alive. The grave could not hold Him. His victory over sin and death secures our life with Him for eternity. The disciples discovered this 3 days later.

LUK 24:33-34 "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

Salvation is complete. Our risen Savior fulfilled His promise to Adam and Eve and their descendants, you and me who believe. He came to set us free from the bondage of sin and with His blood

shed on our behalf has purchased our salvation. But there's one more truth.

But in accomplishing our salvation it is inferred that the curse must ultimately be taken out of the way once and for all and in its place the "Hope" of the former things being taken out of the way to make room for the new heavens and new earth, that inheritance we've been promised in Christ where death has finally been vanquished in its entirety in our lives.

1 Corinthians 15:53-58 ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

Truth #7)

The number of completion. It all comes down to this one fact. Each person must confess his sin and humble himself before God to receive this gift of eternal life. Sin has separated us from God and it is sin we must confess and forsake as we throw ourselves on the mercy of God accepting Jesus' atonement for us.

ROM 10:8-9 "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Confessing and believing is forsaking dependence on "self" to get to God, and transferring it to Christ who is the only One who is our righteousness. That's called saving faith. This is what we celebrate this morning. We celebrate life eternal in Christ. And we celebrate the privilege of being commissioned by Christ to go out into this world to make disciples.

Luke records in ACT 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

One of my favorite verses is found in John's first epistle.

1JO 5:11-13 "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

If you've trusted Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins, you have eternal life. If you haven't embraced Him by faith, you don't. That's the truth. But today is the day of salvation. There's no excuse not to come to Him and discover what it is to stand before the living God as "not guilty" through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It's as simple as saying yes to Jesus, and no to self.

I hope this helps in your understanding of how you may share the gospel with the world and I hope God gives you the opportunity to be His witness. We're talking about life, and there's no greater thrill than to lead someone to the throne of Grace and see them personally meet their God and Creator and call Him Father as He calls us His children.

Thank Jesus who has made it all possible; our faithful God.