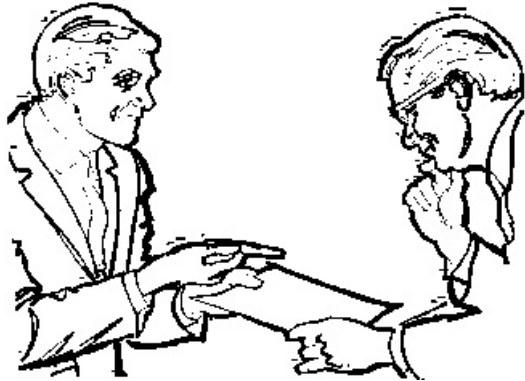


Being Ready To Give An Answer



“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:
and be ready always to give an answer to
every man that asketh you a reason of
the hope that is in you with meekness and
fear” (1 Peter 3:15)

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To many believers, 1 Peter 3:15 is a familiar verse. Whenever we come to a familiar verse our attitude should be, “Lord, I need to know this verse better. I don’t know it as I should. Teach me what this verse means anew and afresh.”

Doing Right No Matter What the Price

The context of 1 Peter 3:15 involves suffering as a result of doing that which is right: “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and **if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake**, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled” (1 Peter 3:13-14). Peter is saying that the believer needs to do right no matter what the consequences might be and no matter how much he might suffer for it. It may be costly to do right, but the believer will be greatly blessed by God: “happy are ye!” We must not be afraid of the unsaved and what they might do to us. God must be our fear: “Sanctify the LORD of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread” (Isa. 8:13). With the fear of God before our eyes, let us only be afraid of not doing right! May we be afraid of doing anything that is not pleasing to Christ. May the thought of doing wrong terrify us.

As we do right in a wrong world, and even suffer for it, the unsaved will take note. They will observe how God’s people react under pressure and persecution. Some of them are even going to ask us questions, and we need to be “bold as a lion” and ready to respond in a way that will point them to the only solution, the only Saviour.

Set Him Apart Down in Your Heart

“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1 Pet. 3:15). This expression is based on Isaiah 8:13 which has already been cited. “SANCTIFY” is a command, the only command in verse 15 (“*be*

ready” may carry the force of an imperative but it is not strictly an imperative. Notice that the word *be* is in *italics*). The believer is told to set apart the Lord in his heart. This is the key phrase of the verse.

God has **sanctified us** (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; etc.); we in turn are to **sanctify God**. God has set us apart; we in turn are to set God apart. God has sanctified us, set us apart for Himself in a special way, called us to be His SAINTS (set apart ones, holy ones). What then does it mean for us to sanctify God?

“Hallowed be Thy Name!” Lord, let your Name be set apart! Let Thy glorious Person be adored and held in reverence! To sanctify God means that we treat Him as holy. We reverence and respect Him for who He is: the HOLY ONE. We recognize Him as Lord. Set apart Jesus Christ as Lord in your heart! Make sure you remember that your heart is the temple of the Holy One. Remember who it is that is Resident in your heart and President of your life. Make sure your focus is on the Holy One, the Supreme One, the Sovereign One. Make sure your eyes are on Him. Moses endured the wrath of the king of Egypt because “he saw Him who was invisible.” He sanctified the Lord God in his heart.

Make sure you sanctify the Lord, giving to God a special place in your heart. If you are going to **communicate** with man rightly you must first have **communion** with God. If you are going to connect with another person you must have a right connection with God. Before you speak to men about God you need to speak to God about men.

You can’t witness properly without God. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1). If God is not in it, it is in vain. It’s possible to leave God out even when we are talking to others about God! We might have the right words. We might even share appropriate Scripture passages. God may even bless His Word in spite of us. The unsaved person

we are sharing with might even get saved, but God was not in the witness as He should have been in it. “...forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Your labor is in vain apart from the Lord! Forasmuch as ye know that your witnessing is in vain if God is not in it!

Sanctify the Lord Jesus. Set him apart in your heart. Regard Him as Holy. Set your focus upon Him. As you reach out to others make sure you are hanging on to Him. “May his beauty rest upon me as I seek the lost to win and may they forget the channel, seeing only Him” (K.Wilkinson).

The Best Offense is a Good Defense!

“...and be ready always to give an answer” (1 Pet. 3:15).

The word “answer” is the Greek word “APOLOGY.” Be ready always to give an apology! This does not mean that the believer is to go around apologizing to everyone. Today when we think of the word “apology” we think of saying “I’m sorry” to someone. But the Greek word “apology” means to give a defense, a reply (literally “to speak back”). If you look up the word “apology” in a good English dictionary you will find that one of the meanings is still “a defense.” To give a defense means to give a verbal defense, to make a speech in defense. As a believer in Christ, you are to defend your hope in Him, to give justification for your rightful expectancy based upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of the early church fathers were known as Apologists (from the same Greek word). These men defended the Christian faith against the charges of its enemies. They wrote letters or books which defended the faith. One of the well known apologists was Justin Martyr.

The believer is to defend himself in light of false accusations that are made against him. It is interesting that in ancient Athens every citizen had to be able to defend himself personally if he were brought to trial or accused. There were no lawyers at that time in ancient Greece. A person could not hire a lawyer to make his defense for him. He had to do it himself. The believer is responsible to make a personal defense. No one else can do it for him.

In 1 Peter 3:16 (the immediate context) the believers were being falsely accused by the unsaved: "...they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation (manner of living) in Christ." Believers are to always be ready to give a defense in light of false accusations. Consider some illustrations of this.

1) Peter, and the other disciples, on day of Pentecost were falsely accused: "These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13). Peter lifted up his voice and gave a skillful defense: "These are not drunk as ye suppose" (Acts 2:15). His defense included a wonderful presentation of the gospel.

2) Stephen was falsely accused by an angry Jewish mob and we find his masterful defense in Acts 7.

3) Paul at different times was brought before rulers, having been wrongly accused, and he was ready to give a defense. One such example is in Acts 22 [see verse 1—"hear ye my defense (apology)"].

4) The early Christians were accused of being "atheists." In the heathen Roman homes were many idols and statues, but in the homes of believers no visible "gods" could be seen, so they were accused of not believing in the gods. They defended themselves against this charge by declaring that their faith was in the invisible and only true God.

5) Martin Luther was accused by the Catholic church of being a heretic and of teaching false doctrine. He gave his memorable defense: "Here I stand, God help me. I can do no other."

A Life That Provokes Questions

"...and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Cult members are often well trained and well indoctrinated in their false doctrine. They are ready always to give an answer to every man that asks them a reason of the *false* hope that is in them. Sometimes they put believers to shame in their ability to handle (mishandle) the Scripture, quote the Bible and discuss Biblical topics. And yet we know that they are resting all their weight on a foundation that is not sure and safe.

Always be prepared and ready to give an answer to everyone that ASKS you. They are going to ask.

Your life provokes questions; your lips supply answers. Colossians 4:6 teaches the same, "...that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (implying that questions will be asked by the unsaved).

Someone might say, "I'm going to be a silent witness for the Lord. I'm going to just let my life be a witness. I'm not going to preach the gospel; I'm going to live the gospel." Living the gospel is essential but it is not enough. Part of living involves speaking. It is true that God wants your life devoted to Him, but He also wants your lips devoted to Him. You can't divorce your lips from your life. We remember "SHOW and TELL." Both are needed. We should show with our life and tell with our lips.

Be ready always for the questions that are going to come your way if you are living godly in Christ Jesus. Here are some possible

examples: “Why do you bow your head before you pray?” “Why do you go to church three times a week and drive such a distance to worship?” “Why don’t you ever use swear words?” “Why don’t you laugh at some of our jokes?” “What are you reading your Bible for? Isn’t the Bible full of contradictions and errors and discrepancies?” Are you ready always to give answers to such questions? Is your life provoking such questions?

The Bible says we are a peculiar people! When people ask, “Why are you so peculiar?”, we should be ready to answer. Actually when the Bible says that we are a “peculiar people” it means that we are a special people of His own (Tit. 2:14). We belong to God in a special way. But as God’s people walk before the unsaved, what we do and say often seems “peculiar” to them. Our lives are to be distinctively different (Rom. 12:2). Questions are going to be asked! Our life should provoke questions; our lips should supply answers.

Be ready always, be prepared always to state your case clearly and convincingly. Always be ready to make a defense. Be expecting questions to come your way and be ready for them when they come. Don’t be surprised when those questions are asked. Be ready for them.

Where Is Your Hope?

We are to be ready to give an answer to every person who asks us a reason for the HOPE that is in us. Literally verse 15 says, “the **in you** hope.” Believers have a hope that is internalized: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Jesus Christ is our hope (1 Tim. 1:1). We have an expectancy that is centered in the Person of Christ who indwells us. The unsaved are totally without Christ and without hope, having no hope (Eph. 2:12). We are not as others who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). The unsaved are in darkness (Eph. 5:8) with no light at the end of the tunnel. As we give our defense, may we point them to the light. May we point

them clearly to the only Solution, the only Satisfaction, the only Saviour.

Guard Your Attitude

As you respond to the question, make sure you do it with the right attitude, “in meekness and fear.”

We should not be argumentative because we are not seeking to win an argument; we are seeking to win a soul. Let us not be arrogant because we have nothing to be proud of except our Saviour. We should not be belligerent, because their hostility and hatred is to the Saviour, not to us. We should not have a “holier than thou attitude,” because we once stood in their shoes; we once stood on unholy, unsaved ground. We should not be looking down on others, but instead should be seeking in love to be a stepping stone for them, not a stumbling block. Our Lord was “meek and lowly of heart.” May we put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, we should give our defense “in fear.” May we operate in the fear of the One whom we have sanctified in our hearts. “Let Him be your fear; let Him be your dread.” The fear of man is a snare. It traps and cripples us. The reason we do not speak to men as we ought and as often as we ought is the fear of men. “What is he going to think of me if I say that?” “Will he be upset or offended?” “Will he think that I am foolish to believe as I do?” These questions are irrelevant to the God-fearer. He wants only heaven’s smile and heaven’s approval, the sunshine of God’s face. He cares not what men may say or think or do. He wants only to honor and obey the Lord Jesus whom He has sanctified in his heart.

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