

“Be Prepared”

1 Peter 3: 13-22

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened” (Isaiah 8:12) 15 But in your hearts revere 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, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 17 It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. 19 In that state he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—20 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.

Peter exhorts us in verses 15 and 16 of our text for today “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” You, me, ALL Christians, are called to be prepared to give an account of our beliefs. If you want a good barometer of how you are doing as a Jesus follower, ask yourself three questions: What do I believe? Whom do I belong to? And What am I becoming? It is very important for each and every one of us to consider those questions. Peter is telling us here, that we need to be prepared to give an answer to any who ask. We must be ready to give an account of what we believe and why. Peter isn’t talking just to clergy, pastors, and/or theologians. Peter is speaking to ALL Christians!

Firemen spend hours, days, even years training, practicing, and planning so that when they get a fire call, they know exactly what to do without having to think about it too much. They prepare carefully, making sure everything is in its place and ready to go so that they don’t waste any time.

Sports professionals and even amateurs spend hours, days, even years, training and practicing and learning everything they can about their sport. They spend many hours in the weight room doing specific exercises that are designed to strengthen the exact muscles they use in their specific sport or event. Football players run and do aerobic exercises two days a week and lift weights three days a week so they will be ready when game time comes to perform at their best. If they need strength they know that they have worked on that. If they need quickness or speed they know they have worked on that also. Seven to eight out of 10 times the team or individual that is best prepared will win the contest or event.

Way back in early 2008 the New England Patriots went into the Super Bowl undefeated winning 18 games in a row. They were playing the New York Giants and the Patriots were bigger, had more overall talent, more size, speed and strength and were the better team. The Patriots had 8 players named All-Pro and the Giants had one. If you ask any NFL coach why the Giants beat the Patriots that day they would tell you that on that day the Giants were the better prepared team. Their offensive and defensive coaches had a brilliant game plan and they communicated it well and prepared the players meticulously to execute it.

Why is it that in the world of sports and many other areas are we so meticulous about preparation and in the spiritual world, with eternity on the line, we are lackadaisical at best? Why is it that in matters of a game we can be so meticulous about preparation and when it comes to a literal matter of life and death, a choice between eternity in heaven or hell, we act like we don't really care? It just doesn't make sense! It is one of the best proofs that our society is really messed up. [NOTE 2]

Peter calls us to be prepared at all times to give an account or an answer to anyone who asks us the reason for our life of hope. Notice how verse 15 assumes a life of hope. If we are living and acting as Christians, people should be able to see a hope in our lives that is missing in their own if they are without Christ. We can only live a life of hope if Jesus is the Lord in our life, in practice. Your relationship to God in Christ needs to be your life's greatest value. If your heart is set on earthly things like possessions, happiness, pleasure, ease and/or comfort, you are vulnerable. These things can be lost at any moment. Nothing can take away your relationship with Jesus Christ if that is what your heart is set on. If Jesus Christ is Lord of your life then you can be completely secure. You can know that you are going to heaven and you can start to produce the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life then you will not be able to help yourself but to live a life of hope.

[NOTE 3] Look back at verse 13. Peter is teaching us that we should be EAGER to do good. The NIV uses the word "eager" here which I feel does not do justice to the Greek word. "Eager" just doesn't express the thought strongly enough. The Greek word that is translated "eager" comes from the word Zealot. The Zealots were a fanatical group of Jewish patriots pledged to liberate the Jews by any possible means from Roman rule. To call them eager is almost laughable. They were prepared to give their lives, sacrifice ease and comfort, home and loved ones, if necessary to accomplish their goal of Jewish freedom. So Peter is teaching us here that we are to love goodness with the same kind of passionate intensity that the Zealots had for a free Israel. Sir John Seeley is quoted as saying, "No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue is safe which is not enthusiastic!" It is only when a person falls in love with goodness, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that the wrong or bad things lose their power and their intrigue.

Christians have an incredible contribution to make to the society in which they live even if it is only to break the cycle of people returning evil for evil. As we begin

and start doing good and demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit, people will begin returning that good. When we do good, when our lives display love for God and love for our neighbor, blessing comes to everyone involved. Yes, sometimes we suffer for doing good, but when we do, God gives us the strength and endurance to withstand and deal with the suffering. **[NOTE 4]**

Verse 15 begins with the words, “But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord.” Set apart the Lord in your hearts as special, as the number one priority. That means above all else ...kids, spouse, hunting, fishing, sewing, reading, job, hobbies, etc., etc.! To be holy is to be different because you have the Lord set apart in your heart as special, as number one, as the highest priority! Lordship is the key to godly living. If Jesus is truly Lord of your life, then you will constantly be doing your best to obey Him, learn about His Word, His life, and strive to live ... Jesus’ way. We are called to live in obedience to Him. IF Jesus is Lord, that means he is in control of my life, He is the ruler of my life. He must “call all the plays” in my life moment by moment. In professional football very few, if any, quarterbacks call their own plays. But they have an option that is called an audible. An audible is basically a play that is predetermined that the quarterback can substitute for the play that the coach sends in if he thinks it will do better. In the spiritual world there is no room for “quarterbacks” (people like you and me) with big heads thinking they can call their own plays. Too often we do that. We decide that the play that God sends in through His word or through the Holy Spirit just isn’t good enough so we call our own play. We think we know better than God. When you put it that way it reveals how stupid we can be. But when we call our own play we are, in effect, saying that we know better than God. I remember back in the mid-80’s when Mike Ditka was the coach of the Chicago Bears and Jim McMahon was the quarterback. In a game against the Packers, Jim McMahon didn’t like the play that the coach had sent in so he called his own play. The result of the play was an interception that got run back for a touchdown. To say the least, you could see on TV that the coach was livid! He was swearing, spitting, and yelling. Now that is where the analogy breaks down because God doesn’t get mad. God is infinite so He is not bound by time so He is never surprised. But there are bad consequences every time we decide to call our own play in life. We have so many reasons to trust God. God sent His one and only Son to earth to die and pay the debt that we owed for all of our sins, and then God raised Jesus from the dead to show us that He had power over sin, death, and hell. Yet we STILL choose to call our own plays. Doesn’t make sense does it? Let go, let go, and let God. **[NOTE 5]**

A man named Sam Wilberforce once said that lordship could be summarized in four words: admit, submit, commit, and transmit. Living a life of hope is directly connected to having Jesus as Lord of your life so let’s take a look at those four words. We need to ADMIT our sin and our dependence on God, our need of a Savior. We need to forsake sin and SUBMIT our lives (100%) to Christ as Lord; the we need to COMMIT our ways to the Lord day by day; and we must TRANSMIT or share Christ’s love and goodness to others. If we admit, submit, commit, and transmit, then people will

see the fruits of the Spirit produced in our lives. We need to be prepared to tell them that such qualities of life do not come from us but rather that they come from the Holy Spirit that dwells within us as we allow Jesus to be Lord of our lives. It is impossible to have Jesus in the person of the Holy Spirit living within us without some of Him leaking out. Allow the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control to “leak out” of your life. Be prepared to give an answer to those who ask you about why your life produces fruit like that. **[NOTE 6]**

Peter also gives us some directions for presenting our answer to those who ask. He gives us help with how we should respond when asked to give an account of our faith or for the reason for the hope we have. What would you say, if someone came up to you an hour from now and asked you, “What is the reason for the hope that you display in your life? How would you respond? I propose to you this morning, that it shouldn’t be something you come up with off the top of your head. This is something that we Christians should prepare for. Some people would call this answer, the account of why and how we can live differently, a “testimony.” For our preparation let’s first look at what Peter writes. He tells us that a Christian defense or answer should be a reasonable and intelligent statement of one’s position. To do this we must have thought it out, we must know what we believe and why. You can’t just say I believe whatever the Bible says. We are called to know ourselves what the Bible says. Our faith must be a first-hand discovery revealed, not some second-hand story. If we can’t tell anyone who asks us what we believe and why, ... then we need to make some time to get prepared. Take what Peter writes here seriously. Make some time to think about your faith, the fundamentals of what you believe and why and write it down!

Peter writes that we are to present our defense or answer with gentleness and respect or reverence. The case for Christianity is best presented with winsomeness, humility and love. Winsome means “attractive or appealing in character.” Very rarely will anyone be argued into faith in Jesus. Most people are exemplified into wanting Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior. We must remember well that nobody possesses the whole and complete truth. None of us has all the answers but God Himself. We simply can not talk down to people if we want them to listen to us. We are to adopt an attitude of gentleness which means there is no trace of pride. So we need to accent humility and love. Peter also hints that our life must be our most compelling argument. Live so that your conscience is clear before the Lord. That means that there is a consciousness of freedom from guilt and having nothing to hide. We need to respond to others with the same respect and honor that Christ had for all persons. Jesus never forces anyone to believe in Him. If you look at His life, you will see that Jesus was gentle, respectful and loving toward all. But of course, we have to respect the Creator above all before we can truly respect His creation.

I would like to conclude by encouraging every one of us, in light of this passage, to go home and think about your faith. How will you answer the next person who asks you about the hope you have in your life? Please, make time to write out your testimony. Keep it to as close to 5 minutes as possible. I encourage you to memorize the

key verses of Scripture that make the gospel message clear. Romans chapter 3 and verse 23 and chapter 6 and verse 23 establish that we all have sinned and that the wages of sin is death (eternal separation from God). John 14:6 establishes that Jesus is THE Way, the Truth, and the Life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. The gospel of John chapter 10 and verse 10 tells us that Jesus came to earth that we might have a full and meaningful or abundant life. Jesus is God's only provision for our sin. He paid the debt. The gospel of John chapter One and verse 12 reads, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God." The book of Revelation chapter three and verse 20 quotes Jesus saying, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; and if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him." And then finally I encourage you to memorize 1 John chapter five and verses 11 to 13 which reads, "And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." We need to be able to present the gospel as part of our life testimony. We need to have specific things about our life that we can relate to others as to the reason for our faith. Prepare yourself. **BE PREPARED!!**

As I was preparing my sermon someone said to me, "How can anyone share their testimony in five minutes." I responded that most people have a three minute attention span. You will do well if you keep their attention for five minutes. If you are sharing about how Jesus has made a difference in your life they will stay interested. So make it a priority to memorize these verses as a first priority. The Bible memory verses are critical. And I don't believe that anyone without some short term memory loss or dementia, cannot memorize one sentence verses. Simply write them down every morning and read them before you go to sleep every night for a week. You will have them mostly memorized. Yes, I know that might be a little boring for some of you, but I guarantee it will be worth it when a friend asks you the reason for the peace you have, the love you have, or your faith.

I want to confess that the last time that I shared my testimony it went way over 5 minutes. I was convicted that I need to write out my testimony again and decide what are the most important points of my testimony that people need to hear and how to sprinkle in the Bible verses so that I can keep someone's attention. No one can read these verse from 1 Peter chapter three without coming to the conclusion that it is important to prepare ourselves to give an answer; a good answer, to the next person who asks the reason for the hope that we have. Be Prepared! Let's pray AMEN.

Sermon Notes for “Be Prepared” based on 1 Peter 3:13-22
Given on October 11, 2015 at Voice of Hope Church

- I. We are all, each one of us, called to “Be Prepared to give an answer (always) to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”
Make time to prepare yourself!
- II. People should be able to see a hope in our lives that is missing in their own life. If Christ is the Lord of your life then you are completely secure, you don’t need to worry, you have assurance of salvation.
- III. Peter calls us to be “eager” to do good. It is only when a person falls in love with the fruits of the Spirit that the bad things lose their power.
- IV. We are called to be holy. “In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord.”
- V. Lordship can be defined in four words:
 - a. Admit
 - b. Submit
 - c. Commit
 - d. Transmit
- VI. What is your testimony? Our faith must be a first-hand discovery not a second-hand story. The case for Christianity is best presented with winsomeness, humility, and love.
- VII. Write out your testimony. Practice it in the mirror or with another person so that you can say it 5 minutes or less. Memorize the key verses: Romans 3:23, 6:23, John 14:6, John 10:10, Revelation 3:20, John 1:12, and 1 John 5:11-13.
Be Prepared!