

# Be Prepared to Make a Defense

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[ 0 : 00 ] My intentions this evening are to cover five verses of inspired scripture in chapter 3 of 1 Peter.

Let me read that to you. Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them nor be troubled.

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, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

[ 1 : 33 ] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

So there you have the words of 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 13 to 17. Now there is no doubt, I don't think in anyone's mind, that we live in a time of tremendous antagonism and hostility that is really an arrow aimed at the heart of biblical Christianity.

Equally, there is no doubt that such antagonism and hostility is increasing globally at an alarming rate.

We see it in American politics at every level of government. We see it in the practice of medicine. If it was not in medicine, we would not be killing 4,000 babies a day through abortion. We see it in all forms of religion. We see it in denominations that purport to be Christian.

[ 3 : 04 ] Although the case could easily be made, they are not even close. Such behavior that we observe in our day is not new.

It is actually the second time that Peter has addressed this issue within the writings of 1 Peter. We find it in the second chapter.

Verse 12, Now keep your conduct among Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

What makes our passage different in chapter 3 is that it is delivered by the great apostle, being Peter, within the context of suffering.

He's been talking about suffering. And we have been blessed in our day to have had men like Dr. Francis Schaeffer.

[ 4 : 20 ] He lived from 1912 to 1984 to lead us. Dr. Schaeffer did that through lectures and teaching and through the 24 books he authored.

I want to give us this evening a rather lengthy quote from Dr. Schaeffer in his book, *How Should We Then Live?* This book depicts the rise and decline of Western culture.

And I'll explain part of this when I get to the end. In ancient Israel, when the nation turned from God and from His truth and from commands as given in Scripture, the prophet Jeremiah cried out that there was death in the city.

He was speaking not only of physical death in Jerusalem, but also a wider death because Jewish society of that day turned away from what God had given them in the Scripture.

There was death. Death in the total culture and in all of society. In our era, sociologically, man destroyed the base which gave him the possibility of enjoying freedoms, but without those freedoms leading him into chaos.

[ 6 : 06 ] Now, humanists, those who reject even the idea that there is a supreme being, have been determined to beat to death the knowledge of God and also the knowledge that God has not been silent.

They want to argue that, well, God hadn't spoken in thousands of years. God has spoken in the Bible.

He's spoken to us through Christ. And they have been determined to silence Him even though the death of values has come with the death of knowledge.

This is Dr. Schaefer. We see two effects of our loss of meaning and values. The first is degeneracy. Think of New York City's Times Square at 42nd Street and Broadway.

I've been there many times. In fact, my dad worked for seven years at 80 Broadway, just 40 blocks away. If one goes to what used to be the lovely Kavlstraat in Amsterdam, one finds that it has become squalid.

[ 7 : 31 ] The same is true of lovely old streets in Copenhagen. Pompeii, which was destroyed by a volcano in Italy, has returned.

The marks of ancient Rome scars, degeneracy, decadency, depravity, and the love of violence for violence's sake. The situation is plain.

If we look, we see it. And if we see it, we should be concerned. But we must notice that there is a second result of modern man's loss of meaning and values which is more ominous and which many people do not see.

The second result is that the elite will exist. Society cannot stand chaos. Some group or some person will fill the vacuum.

an elite will offer us arbitrary absolutes and who dares to stand in their way. Now, Dr. Schaefer is not an easy read.

[ 8 : 50 ] I used to read him all the time with a dictionary open. He's a brilliant man. He's long dead. But these places that he's talking about at one time were places of great beauty.

People took wonderful walks with their family to enjoy this beauty and now they become centers of decadence, blatant prostitution, public homosexual activity, and the worst kinds of drug abuse.

Today, in some of the places that I've mentioned and others I haven't, the police go in early every morning to pick up the bodies of people that died during the night from drug overdoses.

Now, for the believer, we live in a time when persecution of Christians is increasing. The world has become very hostile to us today.

I can assure you of this, it's going to get worse. It's going to get worse. So what is the solution?

[ 10 : 13 ] The Apostle Peter will give us tonight five principles believers need to embrace to equip and defend themselves against threats of an unbelieving, hostile world.

Remember, Peter penned these words, but he did so in the power of the Spirit of God. And first of all, we must have a passion for goodness.

Be passionate about doing good things. 1 Peter 3.13 Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

Now, obviously, Peter is asking a rhetorical question. He's no longer around for us to answer him. His question is very similar to one asked by the Apostle Paul in the great book of Romans.

Romans 8.31 The second part of that. Remember, chapter 8 is a central chapter in all the Bible. If God is for us, who could be against us?

[ 11 : 40 ] Great question. The answer is no one. Not if God's for us. John Knox, relative to my wife's and the great reformer of Scotland, said the following, with God on his side, man is always in the majority.

The key to all of this is that we must remain zealous. He used that word. good. Be zealous. And it is linked to the word good, which in the Greek language means generous, unselfish, kind, and thoughtful toward others.

We have to have a zeal for such things as these. So that's the first thing. but we also must have a willingness to suffer for what is right.

1 Peter chapter 3 verse 14 and then I'll skip to verse 17. But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed.

have no fear of them nor be troubled. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

[ 13 : 25 ] Having a passion for goodness is good. When I typed that out, I looked at it, I said, well, I'm not trying to employ a pun here.

But having a passion for goodness has never been a rock-hard guarantee to prevent suffering. Remember, Jesus is our example. He did constant good. In fact, the Scriptures tell us in Acts chapter 10, verse 38, He went about doing good.

Jesus was very clear that believers will not escape all suffering if the Lord didn't escape all suffering.

And there are many examples in the early church of followers of Christ suffering for the sake of righteousness.

[ 14 : 33 ] Righteousness. they suffered for righteousness sake. Well, what is the result of suffering for the Lord Jesus?

Peter tells us that if we suffer for righteousness sake, we will receive blessing. How is that possible? Peter is actually going to answer this later in 1 Peter. In the meantime, waiting for that lesson, we have the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5, verses 10 to 12. blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

[ 15 : 46 ] rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

And then the Spirit of God wrote these words in the book of Revelation chapter 14 and in verse 13 and I heard a voice from heaven saying, write this, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.

Blessed indeed says the Spirit that they may rest from their labors for their deeds follow them.

Now the Apostle Paul addressed the concept of suffering in a famous passage in the letter of 2nd Corinthians chapter 12 verse 7 to 10 so to keep us from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations a thorn was given me in the flesh a messenger of Satan to harass me to keep me from becoming conceited three times I pleaded with the Lord about this three times that it should leave me he asked the Lord to remove this thorn but the Lord said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness therefore I will boast all more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of

Christ may rest upon me for the sake of Christ then I am content with weaknesses insults hardships persecutions and calamities for when I'm weak then I am strong that's the words of Paul sometimes suffering is God's will even for the righteous even the unknown author of the book of Hebrews had this to say for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it Hebrews 12 11 well there's a third principle we must have a devotion to

[ 19 : 03 ] Christ be devoted to Christ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord is holy 1 Peter 3 15 the very first part of that verse now the word honor here is also the same word for sanctify it's obvious that the apostle Peter read the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament we read these words in Isaiah in the King James version sanctify the Lord of hosts himself and let him be your fear and let him be your dread Isaiah 8 13 when followers of Christ the Lord in their hearts when they follow and sanctify the Lord they're doing several things one they are affirming his control instruction and guidance second they're declaring his majesty third they are submitting to God's sovereignty and four they are putting on display the fear of God alone now this fourth point that word fear that's not cringing in the corner in the dark hoping the boogeyman doesn't get you that is a word for reverence and trust it's an intense word that we fear the

Lord through the exercise of reverence and trust now we know as believers and members of the church the word sanctify typically means to be set apart we're called the set apart ones the called out ones it also means to consecrate by consecrating we are adoring Christ exalting Christ and worshiping Christ we rightfully set apart Christ from every living thing in the universe he is our object of love reverence loyalty and the God to whom we give full allegiance and obedience now as believers we acknowledge the perfection of Christ we know to do that we magnify his glory we declare his preeminence we submit to his will often such submission will result in suffering from a Christ rejecting world just a few days ago I saw a report that upwards of 100 church goers in the Congo were beheaded a couple of weeks ago 100 didn't see that in the New York Times all of the things we've discussed to this point in this third principle originates within the heart of a believer there's a fourth principle we must have these are absolutes the fourth principle is that we must have a readiness to defend the faith and that's always been important but never more so in our day be ready to defend the faith 1st Peter chapter 3 verse 15 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

one of the greatest opportunities we will ever have to defend the truth of Christ is in the midst of suffering for his name the Greek word for defense is apologia we're apologists means we are ready and able to defend the truth regardless of the circumstances now if you're an apologist that doesn't mean you go around apologizing for the gospel you defend it when our previous pastor

Dr. Coleman was in China to preach about Christ the local police heard about it they came to his hotel room and picked him up took him down to the station once at the police station they asked him what are you doing in China and before answering he reflected on that question briefly anyway and two thoughts came to mind the first thing was the passage in the Ten Commandments that says we're not to lie do not bear false witness the second thought that brother Don had was when apostle Paul was taken before the authorities and questioned and the scriptures tell us he testified to the magistrates concerning

Christ so that's the course of action that Don followed he didn't lie and he testified before the magistrates so the police sat there and said are you hungry he said yeah kind of am so they shared their lunch with him drove him back to the hotel and said hey the next time you come to China would you let us know that you're in town and Don said yeah I'll do that what did Don do to bring all this positive result he defended the faith he defended Christ before the authorities ask yourself a question internally are you ready tonight to defend the faith regardless of the circumstances could you do that according to the word of God we just read in first

[ 26 : 32 ] Peter chapter three we must always be prepared to give an account for what we believe concerning Christ brothers the gospel of Christ is the greatest hope we have in the world and I always like to quote a dear friend of mine he lives in Hong Kong he's an Australian his wife lives in Australia with her kids he has an apartment in Hong Kong very nice one and I've been there and had lunch at his apartment and he's got that whole floor and he's got I guess 20,000 books in storage all in order unlike mine and he takes those into Korea he likes to and China some of them he's a wonderful guy he was arrested in Korea and Korea can be very dangerous they kill people in

Korea they arrested him and they said to him what are you doing in Korea and he thought and he said I'm sharing Christ okay where do you live Hong Kong well you have any other houses in the world he said yeah in Australia and he was so glad he did that because they took out a photograph and said is this your house in Australia and it was his house his wife and kids out in the yard now can you imagine if he'd chosen a path of lying what that might have resulted in but they took him to the airport and flew him out they called the Hong Kong authorities and said we're sending a very dangerous criminal back to Hong Kong you might want to meet the airplane and when he got off they started laughing they knew him real well they drove him to his apartment we actually call him brother Andrew but that's not his real name but he's an apologist he said this too

I always remember this the gospel is so powerful it will find a way to penetrate the darkest areas on earth and everywhere I've gone I've found the gospel is there you will find someone that's a believer and they want to take you home and feed you or let you stay in their apartment I was on an elevator in China and this guy had on couldn't speak a word of English had on a dove and I pointed at it and he pointed at me and shook hands and hugged and it was an emotional thing be ready to defend the gospel well according to scripture how should we convey the truth concerning Jesus Christ well the command is we do it with gentleness and reverence and reverence get a lot more sugar can't you now gentleness does not mean weakness just means don't be overbearing don't beat them over the head with a bible

Paul helps us in this passage in the book of Ephesians Ephesians 4:15 speak the truth in love powerful verse Ephesians 4:15 now remember this brothers if you're willing to present the gospel of Christ in a dying world you could be attacked it could happen could be verbal could be physical so how do we prepare ourselves for such a text again I appeal to the apostle Paul where he says in Ephesians 6 verses 10 to 18 and you're very familiar with this finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might put on the whole armor of

God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers against authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand or to withstand in the evil day and having done all stand firm stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth having put on the breastplate of righteousness and as shoes for your feet having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace in all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of

the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication one final principle tonight have a pure conscience have a good conscience 1st

[ 32 : 54 ] Peter chapter 3 verse 16 have a good conscience so that when you are slandered those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame the conscience is a divinely placed internal mechanism it is there to accuse or excuse us depending upon the circumstances but and this is important the conscience is not infallible also the conscience is not the voice of God nor is it his moral law we can better know ourselves by having internally a good conscience conscience works inside us we must guard the purity of a clean conscience!

we need to we need to have a good conscience and maintain it we should always work to maintain a blameless conscience before God and before man if you have a clear conscience it does not matter what the world and the devil throw at you that's not true of an unclear conscience an unclear conscience does not help us through the difficult times if you have a clear conscience and someone tries to shame you they're the ones who will be put to shame probably the greatest non-inspired book written on this subject was the vanishing conscience by John MacArthur he's written 148 books I bought this one a long time ago the vanishing conscience really good book and I was going to offer it for someone to borrow and I already have a taker so we'll maybe we can get that passed around for those that are interested now we're going to finish 1

Peter chapter 3 next time by talking about the triumph of Christ's suffering the triumph of the suffering of Christ Thank you.