

Be Ready to give an Answer

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 December 2008

[0 : 00] I want to look at especially 1 Peter 3 verse 15 here. 1 Peter 3 verse 15. It's speaking in terms of a context of persecution or of suffering as we follow that which is good.

! Of suffering for righteousness sake. And Peter writes here, 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.

Now we're living in a day and time where there's many false doctrines abounding. False doctrines and false teachings, false religions.

Faith is being challenged everywhere you look. As we've heard, prayed earlier of our brothers and sisters in India who are suffering for Christ's sake. As there's much persecution and even in our text here it talks of terror. Verse 14. Be not afraid of their terror.

These are days of terror and terrorism. Be not afraid of their terror. God's word tells you. Don't be afraid. Don't be troubled. But instead sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. As believers you will be challenged. We're facing a world in crisis.

[1 : 32] Many are saying even the secular commentators are talking about our world being in a crisis. And the government is talking about crisis so much of the time of late. It's in the media all the time.

And yet we're not to be afraid. We're to sanctify the Lord in our hearts and to be ready. And so we'll look through this verse together and some of the key things it's telling us and encouraging you. As God's people. You can take heart. Don't be afraid of their terror. Don't be concerned. Don't be troubled.

You are following the Lord as his people. And it says in verse 12 that the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. But for you the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers.

Isn't that encouraging to know that when you pray it's not just bouncing off the ceiling. His very ears hear your words, your voice, your cry as you sanctify the Lord.

And so looking through this verse from verse 15. But sanctify the Lord God. Firstly, sanctify.

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. Set him apart. Set the Lord God apart is what it's saying here.

[2 : 44] Sanctify him. Set him apart in your affections, in your loyalty. Have that devotion. Have that adoration. Don't humanize him. Uphold him. Reverence him. Adore him. Revere him.

The Arabic translation, I'm told, it's got the sense of bless the Lord in your hearts. Bless the Lord in your hearts. Hold him dear. Hold him close.

Hold him as esteemed, as honoured, as elevated, as revered, as praised. And come under his government. Make him your refuge. Make him your strength. Seek his will.

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. Isn't that wonderful to think that you and I, as mere mortal creatures, as sinful by nature, can have the very Lord God sanctified, set apart in our heart by faith. It's not talking about outward shows of devotion and religious acts. But it's talking about the reality of the inner man, of the real you, of the secret life of your inner heart, of your inner self, of the real you, your spirit, your heart.

[3 : 54] You can have the Lord God sanctified, set apart in your heart. And David the psalmist cried, What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

Psalms 56 verse 3. Sanctify the Lord God in your heart. And he will help you to cope with those things that might face you as challenges about you. And he says, Sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready.

Secondly, be ready. Be ready. It's a command. You are instructed, you are commanded by God to be ready. It's not optional. Be ready. It's a command.

Be ready to give an answer always, all of the time. Be ever ready. Be always ready to give an answer. Now, it says here, to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason.

We'll get to hope later. Ask a reason of the hope. Now, we've got a reason for hope. We've got a reason.

[4 : 55] And we should always be prepared to give an answer for the truth of our faith. Now, this word reason, I'm told, is the word *logon*, which is related to *logos*, the word.

We've got a reason for faith. We've got a reason for hope. A reason for rejoicing. The reason for our salvation. It's the ground of our hope. The very Bible. The word of God. We've got a reason.

We've got something we can count on. We've got a trustworthy account. A record, as we told it is. And Christianity is founded upon evidence.

We have solid evidence. It's undisputable. It's not in doubt. And we have a reason. The ground of our hope is the word of God. Are we ready to make an answer?

To always give an answer. Now, this word answer is related to, it's the word *apologia*. It's to do with, I know, *apologetics* is where we get this from.

[5 : 54] I know, as I was telling you lately, they have their love *apologetics*. And *apologetics*, it doesn't mean we're saying sorry in this meaning, or having an *apologizing* for our faith.

But the word *apologia*, it means that we are defending the faith. That's the sense of it here. The word to give an answer means that we are defending.

We're defending the faith, the word of God. And it literally could be also put a logical explanation.

We can give an answer, a logical explanation for why we believe.

When people question and they want an answer, we can give a logical explanation, a logical answer that's based on evidence. A defense that's grounded upon the word of God. And we have a reasoned explanation for our hope.

In many philosophies of our world today, there's all kinds of imagined ideas and concepts and man's thinking. We're not talking about that. Christianity is not based on airy-fairy thinking.

[6 : 57] It's based on grounds, on evidence, upon a foundation stone, the word of God, the truth of God's word. And Christianity is something that will stand up to scrutiny.

It will stand up to people who go over it with a fine tooth comb and look at it through the magnifying glass and try to scrutinize and find and pick fault with it.

It stands up to them. There's many skeptics who approach the Bible with that viewpoint and they've been converted when they see that as much as they try to tear it to bits, it's tearing them to bits.

It's showing them their great needs. It's something that demolishes their arguments as much as they try to tear it apart and discard it and destroy it. And Christianity has got a foundation of reason, of logic, of truth to it, such that what we believe has a reasonable basis for it.

It's got a reasonable basis. It's an intelligent thing to become a Christian, to trust in. And then we can defend the faith intelligently and forcefully as one with conviction, with that heart that is established in truth.

[8 : 09] And defending the faith will help you to grow. I know for myself personally, as a young man, some 15 years old, there was a couple of people that came into my life in England at the time when I was doing the equivalent of year 11.

There was a Muslim boy in my class and he was quite argumentative about beliefs and truths.

At the time I was a bit of a kind of lukewarm kind of Christian, I could say. I wasn't very strong, wasn't very caring about these things.

But his faith challenged me to investigate his faith and Bible faith and to come to a stronger conviction about the Word of God, about my Christian life.

And it helped me to grow as a Christian. When you have to give answers, you will find the answers. And that was true also when I came and did year 12 in Elizabeth here.

[9 : 14] I had a Mormon classmate. And he likewise was telling me all his stories. He was preparing for his two years on the mission field and learning all his stuff by rote of Mr. Smith says this and the Mormon says that.

And he had to learn, memorize everything that they do so that they got it all parroted away what their answers are, their pet answers for every encounter they have as they knock their doors and talk to people.

And I was challenged to explore again, to examine again what are their claims compared to what the Bible claims are. And it helped me to establish me in my faith as we have a faith that has got a reasoning to it.

It's got a logic to it. It's got grounds for it. And likewise too, as Christians, be able to present a reasoned defense of the faith. What do you believe and why do you believe it? Another good source for me as a young Christian was this book. So what's the difference? It looks at, for example, Buddhism, Mormonism, Unitarianism, Roman Catholicism, Christian signs, Jehovah's Witnesses, Islam, Hinduism.

[10 : 25] What's the difference? What's the difference? This will show you what the difference really is between Bible Christianity and these substitutes, these false religions and philosophies of our world.

I welcome you to borrow that book and have a look. It explores the key points to such things as salvation. You've got to get that right for a start. You know, the view about the Word of God, the view about what the cross means, what salvation means, who is God. And these are things you need to get grounded on, to get firm about. And likewise, as I talked about the Answers book, this sort of material will help you, to establish you, to help you to grow. What do you believe and why do you believe it? Friends, you need to be established in that. We all need to be encouraged to grow stronger so that when you are challenged, when someone asks you, why do you believe or what do you believe, you'll be able to give them an answer. You'll be ready to give them an answer. Some find this difficult. I know we all can. To put into words what they believe and why. So you need to know why you believe what you believe.

[11 : 34] And learn to get stronger so you can express it, so you can give that logical explanation. And how do you have that kind of grounding? As you search the Scriptures.

Search the Scriptures to see what things are. What is so? To discern, to meditate on them, to learn, to be grounded so that you can be confident. As you know, some verses, some truths that are clear, you can express them to others that need to hear the message.

And as part of that giving an answer too, it's about your testimony as well, as a Christian. Your own story of how you came to trust the Saviour is a telling answer that you can give to those that would question you about what you believe and why you believe it.

The testimony of God's grace. And you know there was a definite time and place and moment and instance where you know for sure you trusted Christ. And you stepped into that new life by faith. That you can have that testimony to people about you. To be His witness by a life consistent with your message. So we're told here that it says to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.

[12 : 49] To 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. Meekness and fear. We're called to be a witness, not someone who's, you know, sometimes you see people witnessing.

It's almost like they've got a Bible and hammering them over their head with it. You know, there's a sense where you need to be tactful and Christ-like in declaring the witness. Of course you've got authority and you've got boldness and you've got the absolute truth, the final authority of God's word.

And you are a spokesman of it and so you should be bold as a lion. The righteous are as bold as a lion. But you should witness with meekness and fear. You were once as they were. Now some people, they're witnessing to people.

You know, you lousy, dirty, rotten sinner. They seem to forget that they were once one.

Themselves. Brothers and sisters, none of us is deserving of His grace.

And we all need to come with meekness and fear and to guide and nurture these ones, to urge them, to press them with the right spirit, with gentleness, with godliness, with a reverence for the truth, with a fear of God.

[14 : 01] That we don't want to give the message truthfully and fearlessly in that sense, but a fear in terms of the reverence of God, the respect for Him and a respectfulness to the person.

That you're wanting to draw them to Christ, to draw them with cords of love as Christ would. And so have that spirit and that attitude as you witness for Him that is consistent with the message. And having a good conscience, it says too, that your life is consistent and holy and pure as the best answer to false accusers. And verse 17 of the context there, 1 Peter 3, There's many persecuted religions in our world today.

Some are not persecuted for righteousness sake, it's purely for their philosophy sake. I was speaking to a Buddhist Friday night and trying to say there's many paths to God.

Friends, you need to lovingly and gently urge them that's not true. If that's what you're saying, then Jesus Christ is a liar. Because He says, I am the way, the truth and the life, no man, not one man, no man cometh unto the Father except by Me.

[15:30] He's the only one and only way. And as much as these kindly and well-meaning people might believe in a Buddha, he's dead and in the ground, he's a dead prophet.

A supposed prophet. But Christ is alive, he's risen, he's a living saviour. And he's the only one who can promise everlasting life. It's such a contrast.

What's the difference? We've got a saviour. We've got the message of His salvation and there's no other name that we can find that in. And so think of fear, a God-given fear.

God can give you a fear, a trembling of the Scriptures, a reverencing for His authority, for His truth. A love for His word and a hatred of evil.

Jeremiah 32, 40 says in part, I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.

Psalms 111, it says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

[16:33] A good understanding have all they that do His commandments. His praise endureth forever. Proverbs 8, 13, The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.

Psalms 147, 11, The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.

And Ecclesiastes 12, 13, Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. There is a needful fear, a needful sense of awe, of wonder, of just amazement, at how God would even choose you, that He would even save you, that He would deign to bear the cross for you, and bear the nails for you, and bear your sin for you.

Friends, how fearful, how revering, how in awe we should be of who He is, of His wonder, of the amazement of Calvary. And so, that fear should draw us to want to give an answer to those about us.

And Paul uses the same word of answer as it's translated in the KJV of the defence of the gospel. The word defence is the same word answer.

[17:51] In Philippians 1, verse 17, there's a defence of the gospel, Paul says. And you could look at Jude, verse 32, where it says, You could contend earnestly for the faith.

There's a needful thing, there's people propagating all kinds of lies, and they're declaring it truth. You know, there's a magazine that was called The Plain Truth at one time, and it's a plain lie, in fact, what it was.

But people label things as the truth, when it's really not. You know, this Buddhist man that I spoke with, well meaning though he was, saying there's many truths, there's many paths. But there's only one soul saving eternal life changing truth.

There's only one who can save your soul from sin and promise eternity. There's only one who can pay for your sin, and his name is Jesus Christ. There is none other name that can save other than his name.

And friends, we need to urge and plead and combat the sense of this earnestly contend for the faith. It's got a sense of combat. It's a sense of struggle, a battle for the hearts and souls of men around about us.

[18:59] As we know these lovely people with their well meaning ways are knocking on doors, declaring a truth that is not true.

And we need to combat that with a reasoned Bible founded faith that can declare intelligently, logically, where they are wrong.

As someone put it, there is an answer in the Bible to every false doctrine, if we will study to find it. It's the word that will help you to be grounded, to have those grounds.

And Christianity is a reasoning faith. It's a reasonable faith. It says in Isaiah 1 verse 18, Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

They be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. So we're told to have that answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you. The word hope.

[19:56] Friends, you've got such a wonderful hope. As a believer today, you have a blessed hope. The Saviour is coming back just for you.

And he's going to look in your face and you're going to see him and you're going to be changed. He's coming back. And it's a blessed hope. It's a glorious hope. It's a glorious, confident expectation.

This word hope, it means confident expectation. It differs from the modern day English understanding of the word hope to this degree. That this hope is not a hope so thing. It's a confident expectation. That's the sense of this word here. It's not something that might happen. It's a hope that is certain and sure. It's promised for you that the Lord Jesus will do what he promised he would do.

And we can put our trust in that. Hope. It's been said that hope is vital for a person's well-being. When you've got hope, it gives you something that keeps you going.

[20 : 57] Hope is something that gives you that little bit extra, that little bit to hang on. And Ephesians 2 verse 12 describes those without Christ having no hope and without God in the world.

Why do they not have hope? Because they don't have God. Without God. That's Ephesians 2 verse 12. But you, friends, today, as a Christian born-again believer today, the Bible says, for you there is the hope of eternal life.

In Titus 1 verse 2, it talks about, In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began. Isn't it wonderful to know the promise of eternal life is from one who cannot lie. God cannot lie. And he's promised it for you. Grab a hold of that promise this morning. The hope of eternal life. It's been described how there was a university experiment in a psychology department. They tested some rats in a bucket of water, a big vat of water, to see how long the rats would swim. And in one container they placed a rat for whom there was no possibility of escape.

[22 : 11] He swam a few moments, then ducked his head to drown. In the other container they made the hope of escape possible for the rat. It must have kind of put something in every so often to give them the impression there was going to be some hope of escaping.

And this rat swam for several hours before finally drowning. And so we usually say as long as there is life there is hope. But this experiment shows as long as there is hope there is life.

And it's like that too for people in our communities, in our world around us. People without hope. They're without life. They're without Christ. They're hopeless. For some they have a hopeless end. But for the Christian we have an endless hope. You can have a hope that is endless, that's eternal, that's forever. As a hope of eternal life that is promised for you by one who cannot lie.

So friends think of that wonderful hope today. Take heart in the hope that the comfort of the Scriptures gives us that hope, that assurance, that confident expectation. So to think for you now, have you sanctified the Lord God in your hearts?

[23 : 17] Do you know Christ as your Saviour? Is He your Lord? Is He your Master? Have you sanctified Him? Have you set Him apart in your heart? Are you ready? Are you ready to give an answer to others of the hope that is in you?

Have you got an answer? Seek to grow as a Christian. Study the Word in church, in Bible study, in personhood. Study in personal prayer time and study.

Grow as a Christian. Learn the Word. Meditate upon it. And feed upon it. So you can be stronger. Read some good books that will help you to be able to intelligently answer those things that are contrary to the Bible.

And learn to witness in meekness and fear as the love of Christ constrains you. As it takes you to others to share the message with them. And think of that ground of hope.

The Bible, the Word of God. This is the reason. This is the Logos. This is the Logos. This is the Word. The foundation stone upon which we build upon our faith's foundation.

[24 : 18] We think of folk who seek to find a reason why not to be a Christian. Some try to pick holes in the Word of God. But the very Word of God you can intelligently, rationally, logically declare the Word of God in its truthfulness by explaining some things.

For example, the unity and clarity of the Bible's message. It's amazing. 66 books written over a period of 1500 years by some 45 authors ranging from kings to poets, prophets to a physician to farmers and shepherds, fishermen and a tax collector.

Various spiritual leaders. Not one of these men knew that he was writing what would become a part of the Holy Bible. And yet those 66 books agree in one.

There's a wonderful unity over that great time span, over continents that were separate nations. And it tells a complete story. That's an amazement in itself, the wonder of the Bible, of the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit put this together. You know, it's been said if you've been on a committee that was assigned a task. And, you know, we have committees in church, in workplaces, and it's sometimes

difficult to get a group of people to agree on something.

[25 : 46] But we know that these 66 books agree. This wasn't put together by a committee. And then it was put together by the Holy Spirit. It was put together by God's doing, by God's making.

If you've got 45 vastly different people on a committee, well, it would be terrible, wouldn't it? You wouldn't have much unity in terms of writing a document that would be coherent together.

But that is what God has done by His wonderful working, the Word of God. And the Lord Jesus says, Your Word is truth. Talking about the Word of God in John 17, verse 17.

Think about the textual basis, the many manuscripts. There's some 20,000 copies of New Testament manuscripts. It's got great manuscript authority. And yet, for similar historical books, there's not anywhere near the wealth of the extent of the document evidence, the manuscript evidence.

It pales into significance compared to the manuscript evidence that we have for the Word of God. Think about the prophecies of the Word of God. This is a supernatural book of more than 2,000 prophecies found in the Bible.

[26 : 58] In Revelation 33, deal about the Messiah. The Messiah detailing such things as how He would be born of a virgin, how His ministry would be enacted, of His character, of His betrayal, for 30 pieces of silver, of His crucifixion, of the piercing of His hands and feet, burial in the grave of a rich man, of His resurrection from the dead.

And mathematicians have looked at these amazing facts about the prophecies that have been fulfilled just in Christ. 333. A mathematician worked out the chance of any one person fulfilling even eight of these Old Testament prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power.

That's 1 with 17 zeros behind it. And someone worked out how you could picture this with being, if you imagine, the whole world covered with white tiles that are 1 1/2 inches square.

So white tiles so big covering the whole of the planet's dry surface. The whole of the planet's dry surface. Every country with a tile this big, 1 1/2 inches square.

And under the bottom of just one tile is painted red. And then you've got to picture one person wandering across the whole surface of the planet around all seven continents.

[28 : 25] He's permitted to bend down only one time and pick up a single piece of tile. What are the odds that he would pick up one tile whose reverse side was painted red, the only one in the whole world?

That is the same as of just eight of the Old Testament prophecies coming true in any one person as it did in Christ. It's an amazing truth. The prophecies of the Word of God are so fantastic and amazing.

And there's many so-called holy books that don't have prophecies in them. It's just collections of sayings. There's not anything that compares with the prophetic power and truth of the Word of God. The fulfillment of prophecy is an amazing testament to the trustworthiness of it.

And so, friends, a reason of the hope that is in you. You have a wonderful hope. Things may not always be as you would like them in the life here below, but you have an everlasting hope.

You have an eternal life, an eternal hope, a reserved place in the heavens for you, an inheritance reserved for you. And so how do you handle those things that might come against you?

[29 : 29] Have that heart of, as it is said in verse 12 here, For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers.

Have that heart attitude that is trusting in Christ to be your shelter, to be your sanctuary, to be your shield, the one you can put your trust in and wait upon as life's doors might come.

And that knowledge, that certainty, that certain hope that God is in control above and beyond all that is going around about you. He is in control. He is in the heavens.

He is on His throne. And we can live with that knowledge that He will do right. He will do that which is right. And we can live as a people of hope in the midst of a culture that is hopeless.

A world that is full of this terror and hopelessness, where people are despairing, their hearts are failing. Our hearts' faith and focus, our hearts' trust is in Christ, isn't it?

[30 : 31] He is our hope. And we have that hope that is eternal, eternal in the heavens. And just to close, it says, of Christ, who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God.

Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. We can pray with the knowledge that He has angels and authorities and powers subject to Him. To not trust in the things of this world, the things of this life, but to put our trust in Him.

To have that hope that goes beyond this world and what happens here. To know that this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith, as it says in 1 John 5.

And so, let your life be a testimony. So that people will want to ask a reason of the hope that is in you. They'll see there's a hope in you. They'll see there's a testimony in your life that makes life different for you and in you.

And they want to know about that. That God is at work calling people to Himself and He's using you to do that. Instead of the God of the Bible, that He is a seeking God.

[31 : 40] He is seeking. He's searching. As we likewise should respond in searching for Him and seeking Him. His mission in Luke 19, 10, He says, For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that you've come to seek and to save that which was lost. We praise you, Lord, that you cared so much to seek and save the lost that it wasn't anything that would hold you back from that cost of Calvary.

That you took the punishment, the pain there. Lord, our sin there. Help us, Lord, to be ready always. That we can give an answer for that hope that is within us.

That hope of eternal life. That hope, that confident expectation of your coming again for us. That hope, that certainty, that we know that we're heaven bound.

Not by any working of our own, but because of the virtue of your cross. Of your death for us on our behalf. Lord, we praise you for that. Help us to grow stronger in our faith and our handling of the word.

[32 : 47] That it might help us to give an answer to those about us. So that they too can trust you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.