

# Have no Fear

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] We're just five minutes together. That verse, that well-known few verses in 1 Peter. I'll read them again for us. 1 Peter, the end of verse 14, and down to the end of verse 15.
- 1 Peter 3. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.
- Yet do it with gentleness and respect and so on. Again, not a sermon, brothers and sisters, just a time together, just a few moments in God's word.
- I wonder if I was to ask every single one of us, everyone in our congregation who knows and who loves the Lord, what's the biggest thing stopping you and I, and myself included in all of this, you and I, in sharing the gospel as often?
- What's stopping us from engaging in that gospel work? We all know the theology. We all believe the theology. We all know that we're called as salt and light.
- [ 1 : 1 8 ] We all know that as members of Christ's church, each one of us, as brothers and sisters and sons and daughters, we're all given the task to be ambassadors.
- We're all called and told to be witnesses. So we know the theology, the theologies. We understand that. So why, when a gospel sharing chance is given to us, at times do we just not take it?
- Well, one of the reasons that I have found, and I'm sure and I hope you share this with me, is the answer of the situation that Peter's dealing with really here.
- We have the fear of, what if you ask me a question or questions I can't answer? What if I say, come to church?
- If I say, come on Sunday, here's an invite. If I say, you know, have you read your Bible? Have I say, what do you know about Jesus? If I say, I believe in Jesus to you, whatever conversation you might be having.
- [ 2 : 2 9 ] Are you scared then? They might say, okay then, but what about dot, dot, dot? But what about this? What about that? And you find yourself, you find yourself bogged down with questions that you know fine well, you have no answers to.
- One thing to say, there are people who ask questions because they want the answers genuinely. And that's what we're dealing with here tonight. There are other people, and we all know them, who ask questions to try and trick us and try and trip us up.
- And the truth is, suppose you give them a perfect answer, they don't really care, do they? They just want to catch us out. So that aside, we're not talking about those who want to catch us out.
- Our saviour, he dealt with plenty of people who only ask questions to catch them out. Our concern is not with them. We want to see them saved, we long to see them saved.
- But our concern is for those who ask us genuine questions. We say, have you ever thought of coming to church? Have you ever wondered what goes on in that building?

[ 3 : 40 ] Have you ever wondered where I go on a Sunday? What do you know about Jesus? Whatever question you might be asking. And they ask you questions back.

Bring your mind to these verses. Again, the end of verse 14, which has a few instructions here for us. A few points of reference for us to help us when we find ourselves worrying and stressing over what we should say to answer questions asked of us.

And the context here, of course, is questions that are vicious, questions that are hard going, questions that are coming from a crowd that are seeking to destroy the church.

Brothers and sisters, most of the questions we face are from friends, family and neighbours who aren't seeking to destroy us. Perhaps we've wanted answers to questions for years.

But Peter gives advice here to those who are dealing with hard questions. First of all, in verse 14, first instruction, have no fear of them nor be troubled.

[ 4 : 45 ] Easy to say, easy to preach. Much harder, I assure you, as we all know, when push comes to shove, you can hear preached just now from God's word here, have no fear of them.

When you get questioned, have no fear. Don't be troubled. Don't be anxious. Don't worry. And the second someone says to you, well, if you're saying God is good, then what about my mum, that died of cancer?

If you say that God is so good, then what about that child that we lost in childbirth? If God is so good, then what about this, the war going on, the dead and dying children and Gaza?

So on and so on. The real questions people have. Our first reaction, if you're like myself, is you feel the heart going. You feel perhaps your palms getting a bit more sweaty, perhaps.

You think, oh no, what do I say, what do I say, what do I do? Well, the first instruction to us is not to start formulating and planning out our great answer. No, the first command for us, the first instruction for us is to remember, have no fear, and don't be troubled.

[ 6 : 03 ] Why? Well, because what's about to happen is not some smart answer that you've prepared. What's about to happen is a formula God has given us.

First of all, don't worry. Share the gospel. Share the invites again. There's copies there. Knock the doors. Go to your friends and family and neighbours. Just as brothers and sisters and as friends.

Don't think for a second that every invite I've handed out the last week or so, that it's not been terrifying at times for me to, don't think for a second that I don't, I just rock up all happy and jolly and easy.

It's not. It's not. It's hard for all of us when you knock the door or when you wait for the answer and you think, oh man, oh man, oh man. We all feel it and if we speak to any of the ministers and I won't name names but friends and brothers and sisters, there's not one colleague, not one minister, not one brother I have spoken to.

Brothers we know and love who don't feel the same way when it comes to sharing the gospel with their friends and their family. We all have the same stress, the same strain. So first of all, the Lord says to us, don't fear them.

[ 7 : 20 ] Don't be troubled. Why? Well, the second instruction is there. In your hearts, honour Christ the Lord as holy. In our hearts, honour Christ the Lord as holy.

The reminder there for us is, it's worth it. As our brothers have prayed, we are worshipping and serving a Lord, a Saviour who is beautiful, who is glorious, who is worth it, who is worth us feeling awkward for five minutes or ten minutes, who is worth us knocking that door.

He is worth us going outside, perhaps very far outside our comfort zone. He is worth it. He is worthy. He is worthy of our time, of course.

He is worthy of us putting the extra effort in to invite that person to church. As hard as it is, as uncomfortable as it is, we honour him as holy.

We honour him as our Lord and Saviour. We remind ourselves who he is, that he has done all things for us. He is holy, he is other, and therefore we need not fear as we seek to serve him in the small service we are seeking to do.

[ 8 : 43 ] Have no fear. Remember, Jesus is worthy. And thirdly, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

Perhaps when we read that verse, we start thinking of apologists, of those who can just like that have answers to every single question people ask them. And there's people like that.

Perhaps you've met them, Christians, who can answer with a chapter and a verse and ten verses and studies and theological books and quotes and they can answer you.

Any question you ask them about the Lord, any question you ask them about what's happening in the world, they can debate evolutionary scientists and evolution, they can debate about creation, they can debate about gender, they can talk about abortion, they can talk about war and suffering, they can do the whole range of arguments.

Brothers and sisters, these men and women are not, I'll speak for ourselves, but they're not common. They're extraordinary men, extraordinary women, the Lord gifts his church with these men and women.

[ 10 : 01 ] We are not all able in that way. We're just not. We don't all have memories that can memorise ten verses, a hundred verses, ten quotes, a hundred quotes.

We can't all know everything about everything. Because everyone who asks us a question is asking a question from their life, from their story. And because everyone's life, everyone's story is so different, we can't prepare, we can't have a defence for every single possible question.

So what are we told? See, the quote here, the verse here isn't saying to us, prepare to make a defence of your faith to anyone who asks you anything. What are we being told to prepare for?

Being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Behind the scenes, there's an ongoing process of preparing a study for us, perhaps a Bible study, perhaps a sermon series, perhaps both, on evangelism and how we share the gospel.

That'll be a long-running course, a long-running series, but I'll spoil the whole series just now for us this evening. The whole series, the whole point of the series is we bring people back to Jesus.

[ 11 : 21 ] The very best books on evangelism, the very best resources on how do we share the gospel, the best of the best books all say, at the very centre, bring the person to Jesus.

So when you share the invite, come to church on Sunday, when you ask the question, have you ever prayed, have you ever thought about Jesus, have you ever, whatever question, however you talk to your friends and family and neighbours, and they ask you a question, a question that you know you can't answer, don't worry about the detail, our job is to give a defence of a hope that's in us.

Now, if you've gone through a situation, if you've gone through a certain type of loss in your life, and that person has too, then you speak about that and have the Lord help you in that situation, that is good, that is right.

Perhaps you have lost one close to you for a certain illness, and that person you're talking to has the same way you share with them how hard it is and how the Lord has been with you through that. Use what God has given you.

But ultimately, our goal is what? It's to bring that person to Jesus. So they say to you perhaps, I don't know, you know, I don't know if I believe in all of that church stuff.

[ 12 : 39 ] I don't really know if I believe that he's real. I don't know if I believe that he cares. You say, well, he is real. I believe he's real.

And here's why. Because I know that 20 years ago, 40 years ago, he showed himself to me in his word and here's how I learned about him. And since then, he's been with me every single day and he's helped me and give a reason for your hope.

Give a reason for your hope. Nine times, this is a Bob Aykroyd or Reverend Bob Aykroyd stat, so don't quote me if I'm wrong, but nine times out of ten, Bob Aykroyd is the ultimate evangelist.

If you've ever heard him preach, Bob spends, I don't know, hours a week, hours and hours a week in the prisons in Edinburgh.

He is the prison chaplain for Edinburgh. He assists our chaplains in Scotland. Bob spends, his time either teaching ministers in class or speaking to inmates and Bob, I'll be careful what I'm saying, it's recorded, Bob has access to areas of, to groups of inmates perhaps that are more difficult than others and Bob goes in and we asked, we used to ask him in class for stories which was bad of us.

[ 13 : 58 ] We did. And Bob would say, he's talked to me about Jesus. Jesus. And Bob wasn't being shy, he was telling the truth. Speaking to a murderer, speaking to a paedophile, speaking to an arsonist, speaking to a man that's killed his family, whatever else, the list goes on and on.

He takes that person to Jesus again and again and again. That person has issues and complications and questions he brings them to Jesus again and again and again. We will face and we do face every type of person.

But the call is to give that person a defence of the hope that is in us. What is the reason for the hope that is in us? Is it not we have believed in a risen saviour who knows us, who keeps us, who loves us, who is with us, who promises one day to take us home, with himself?

Bring them to Jesus. Give them your hope which is Jesus. And the final bit of advice in that verse is quite simple but it's quite necessary for us.

As you give your defence, as you share your story, do it with gentleness and respect. The sentence cries on to verse 16, have a good conscience.

[ 15 : 22 ] etc. But gentleness and respect. Now I have no doubt and no worry that every one of us would share our testimony, share our hope, share what we have in Jesus with gentleness and respect.

But it's a reminder for us. we are sharing the good news to those who are dead in our sins, those who are dead in understanding.

And the reminder there is, whatever you are dealing with, whatever hard questions they may throw your way, bring them to Jesus and conduct yourself in a way that honours him.

Again, not that you wouldn't but just to remind ourselves. Because at the end of the day, if you can't answer the question they ask you about why did God allow so and so or this or that, that question they have anyway.

If you say, well, I'm not sure but I can get back to you. And I always just say that. People, people love an honest answer. I'll tell you this from my own perspective.

[ 16 : 31 ] Never just, don't give an answer on the spot if you don't know the answer. Just ask for time. Ask for time.

People respect that far more than anything else. People might forget the answer you give them. What they won't forget is how we are towards them. People see us engaging in our community in a winsome way.

People say, well, that person, that Christian, they took time to ask me my life story. They took time to draw alongside me to say, well, I'm sorry that happened to you.

I'm sorry you went through that. Can I tell you about Jesus? Or even the question that perhaps is so hard for us but one to our shame perhaps we don't ask often enough is that so awful.

I'm sorry if it happened or whatever. Can I pray for you? People will remember gentleness. People will remember respect. Friends, brothers and sisters, it's a hard task.

[ 17 : 43 ] It's an impossible task. We turn to the last verse of chapter 3. verse 22.

Jesus Christ who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities and powers having been subjected to him.

you will undoubtedly face awkward questions and conversations. You'll feel as if you've got nothing to say.

You'll worry about you've been not the best witness when you share the gospel. Brothers and sisters, we are not battling with the people of North Tulsa.

We're not here against them. our war is not with flesh and blood, is it? Our war is with what? Dominions, authorities and powers.

[ 18 : 48 ] Our friends and family and neighbours, they are lost and they are blind, blinded by authorities and powers. But who, I would remind in this verse, is over all that?

The Lord Jesus Christ who is over, reigning over the angels, the authorities and powers having been subjected to him.

Go out in prayer. Go out in faith. If no one turns up on Sunday, if no one who's been invited comes on Sunday, has the Lord failed?

Have we failed? No. We've shared the word, we've shared an invite, we've been at contact.

If a hundred people were to materialise on Sunday morning, is that better or worse? Well, we'd be very happy with it. our job, as we know, is to plant the seed and water the seed.

[ 19 : 58 ] Plant the seed and water the seed and keep doing that until the end. The Lord brings the growth, the Lord brings the life, the Lord brings the increase. And we pray we see increase in Tolstead.

We pray, we do, and know we are praying for that on our knees. It's the Lord's work. We're called to be part of that work.

We're commanded to be part of that work. But it's His work. So we go sharing the hope we have, the hope in our risen and glorious Saviour.

Just a few thoughts for us from His Word. Alistair, a word of prayer. Please, brother.