

20221009 Be Prepared to Give a Defense for the Hope that is Within You

Believers are called to be the salt and the light of the world. We are to have a living hope within us that is different from ANYTHING seen in the world. We have a living hope because we know God is ultimately in control. When we see the world in chaos, we should never fret because we know God is working His purposes out as the time draws near. Satan has significant sway over the earth, but it is only for a season (1 John 5:19). We should NEVER lose hope. This morning we will look at a passage in which Peter instructs believers to get along with one another in a radically different manner from how the world gets along. Please open your Bible to 1 Peter chapter three, verse eight.

8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

*13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He **went and preached** to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (1 Peter 3:8-22, NKJV).*

Jesus said, *"35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:35, NKJV). In this passage we are studying today, Peter is specific

about how we're to love one another in the Church. These last few weeks, Peter has told us how to get along with the government, and then he told us how to get along in the "marketplace" (describing the relationship between employees and employers).

On Wednesday night, we looked specifically at how husbands and wives are to interact with one another. In each of these cases, we've reminded ourselves that this just can't be done on our own. **We can only do this through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

VV.8-9 *"Finally, all of you **be of one mind**, having **compassion** for one another; **love as brothers**, be **tenderhearted**, be **courteous**; **9 not returning evil for evil** or **reviling for reviling**, but on the contrary **blessing**, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing".* Peter begins by telling us to "be of one mind." The Greek word used is the word from which we get the word "harmony" in English. As believers, we are to seek to live harmoniously with one another. We must be in harmony in our appreciation and study of God's Word. As we study the Bible, it is not open to our personal interpretation. The Holy Spirit will lead us into HIS truth. This is not my truth or your truth, but God's truth. That is why I so often point us back to the text.

We're in harmony with one another in how we live and how we interact with one another. We should all be singing one song of the redeemed Holy Spirit-led life, but we are all singing a different note. If I can continue my metaphor, we need to be singing the same song, and we need to sing in the same key. Unity is near to the heart of God (Psalm 133). He weeps when brothers and sisters refuse to dwell together in unity. Disruption of unity is the primary biblical reason for Church discipline.

When Paul called out the Church in Corinth, he didn't do so just because a guy was sleeping with his stepmother; but because of the congregation's attitude in responding to it all. He says, *"2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you."* (1 Corinthians 5:2, NKJV). They were probably more impressed by their tolerance and understanding spirit than they were in leading a brother to repentance. I am sure some were horrified by what was happening, but others were okay with it. This created disunity.

Peter urges us to have compassion for one another. **Compassion** isn't just empathy or sympathy for your brother or sister's terrible situation, but it is when a desire to help accompanies those feelings. It is when "feeling sorry" for someone takes feet and hands. It is sitting with them while a loved one dies. It doesn't just say, "call me if I can do anything." It is knowing a brother or a sister needs air-conditioning, and instead of praying about their need, you go to Lowe's and buy the AC and put it in. **It is feelings plus action.** Most people we help don't deserve the help because they've done

something to get themselves into their own mess, but that is not the measure of our compassion. Peter tells us to be compassionate with one another.

Love as brothers and **be tenderhearted** means that we are to consider each other's feelings. We are to treat one another in the way that a family is supposed to treat one another. The older I get, the more careful I am about teasing much about anything. It is just too easy to hurt another's feelings. Let's be careful to have tender hearts (good-hearted) toward each other. Sometimes I wonder if I still have a tender heart. I found a video on youtube and watched it with my eyes full of tears.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c5Qwaasj7E>) Our old friend, Bob Bennett, sang it, reminding us we must "Come and See a Man Called Jesus." I am glad that I am still able to weep on occasion.

Be courteous. Have a "humble mind." Every human contact is a chance for courtesy or conflict. Choose courtesy. I also urge you all to be grateful and express your gratitude. Some people have a problem expressing gratitude when someone does something for them. Maybe they're afraid somehow this makes them indebted to another. This is a dysfunction. It doesn't make you obligated to thank others. It expresses your gratitude. TELL PEOPLE THANK YOU WHEN THEY DO SOMETHING FOR YOU. That is a big part of being courteous and loving as this passage calls us to love. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the cards, letters, texts, and emails that some of you send, telling me you love me, appreciate me and say that you're praying for me. THAT is the heart of what Peter is telling us to do.

When someone hurts you in the Church, don't hold a grudge. Don't be offended. Don't return ugliness with ugliness. When someone reviles you (criticizes you and attacks), don't criticize and attack back. When you've treated someone in here with ugliness, be quick to apologize and set things right. We're to love and take care of one another in authentic ways. Peter tells us how to respond with kindness EVEN WHEN WE'RE NOT TREATED NICELY. In so doing, you WILL RECEIVE A BLESSING. This is not easy to do. Try to answer back ugliness with a gentle response, or don't answer. Sometimes people ask you rhetorical questions just to put you down. Remember that when Pilate questioned Jesus, he didn't say anything. Don't cast your pearls before swine.

VV. 10-12 Peter tells us exactly how to respond by quoting a portion of Psalm 34:10. This is how you'll have a good life and see "good days." *12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.* "We are to seek peace regardless of whether others are trying to seek peace. The flesh in us wants to strike back. Peter says, "DON'T DO IT." You will have a "good life and see good days" in your kindness.

VV. 13-14 Peter generally says that if you live a good life, you will have fewer problems. Life brings enough sorrows and troubles of its own. Don't invite trouble. Don't involve yourself in disputes that are not your own. But if you suffer for doing right, don't worry because you'll have a blessing. Don't be worried or troubled by that. Peter is writing this letter saying if you're doing right and you're still suffering, don't live in fear. The Lord is aware of EVERYTHING that you're going through. This, too, will pass.

V. 15 Then Peter tells us how to respond to those who ask about our hope. This tells us that we SHOULD BE LIVING IN A WAY THAT OUR ATTITUDE SHINES THROUGH. WE SHOULD HAVE A HOPE WHEN ALL AROUND US ARE HOPELESS. Peter encourages us to honor Christ the Lord as "Holy," prepared to "make a defense." The Greek Word is "*apologia*." This means a defense of the faith; and an explanation of how we can have hope in a hopeless world. Peter is telling us that we should answer anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope within us. Are you living in a way that people see hope in you? Do you yourself have hope? Are you always talking about what's wrong in the world, or are you pointing the world to Jesus?

BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER. Can you communicate this hope that you have? Can you explain why you believe what you believe and why you have hope? Most Christians think, "I can't do that," or they think it comes automatically. Peter says **BE PREPARED TO GIVE A RESPONSE**. You prepare yourself by knowing God's Word and being able to communicate it. If you're unsure how to share it, let me make some suggestions.

Explain to others that our faith is not blind faith. It is a reasonable faith. Our coming to God is first based on a reasonable belief. Yes, a significant element of faith follows, but our hope is rational. With all of the prophecies that have come true, God's Word proves itself over and over. Belief in the supernatural origin of the Bible and its accuracy is a reasonable belief. And when you share your belief, do it with gentleness and respect. Don't say things that sound judgmental or condemning. Don't beat people over the head with a Bible. Be courteous, gentle, and respectful, and have a good clean conscience about what you share when you share it. Don't worry about whether people accept what you say or not. Just follow the Holy Spirit's guidance as you share.

VV. 16-17 *16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.*

Peter tells us that some are not going to listen to the explanation we have for the hope that is in us. They're going to malign us and defame us. Just respond with a blessing. Don't worry about it. It is better to suffer for good than to suffer for doing evil. If it's

God's will that you suffer for doing good, remember Romans 8:28. It is a promise. The suffering may come now, but there will be a promised reward later.

*VV.18-22 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He **went and preached** to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.*

Peter discusses the time between Jesus dying and when He rose from the dead. Jesus' spirit was released and went and ministered. Did people go to heaven before Jesus? No. Jesus paid the price for our entrance into heaven. Jesus went and proclaimed to the "spirits in captivity." Jesus told the story of Lazarus in Luke. It isn't a story about purgatory. It was some kind of holding place. The Jews called this place "paradise," "Abraham's side," and other things.

The story in Luke tells us that a rich man was in "hades" (translated from Hebrew *sheol* meaning "the grave"). [\[11\]](#) This rich man died apart from embracing the mercy of God, and he was in torment awaiting judgment. This isn't a parable because Jesus used proper names. I can't think of a single parable that used proper names. So apparently, Jesus was telling us that those who trusted in God's mercy were put in "Abraham's bosom" or "paradise."

So, when Jesus died on the cross, He went to *sheol*, and He proclaimed Himself Messiah and Savior to those in waiting. The gospel was presented to those who had perished trusting God or not trusting God. Paul talks about this in the Book of Ephesians.

In Ephesians 4:7-10, Paul tells us, "7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

Paul says He went to *sheol* and led a host of captives into heaven. He emptied paradise and took them all to heaven. In John 3:13, Jesus said, "No one has ever gone into heaven except the One." This was before the cross. When absent from the body,

believers are now present with the Lord. In the old days of Yom Kippur, sins were covered, but now our sins are wiped clean with the blood of Jesus.

These last few verses (v.21) talk about baptism; he says we're saved "through the resurrection." It is easy to read this and think that water baptism saves you. It does not. Peter is talking about the spiritual reality behind the act of baptism that we perform. Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again," "not of the flesh but the Spirit." It is Jesus' sacrifice on the cross that saves us. I saw a great meme this week about theology. I put it on the Church's Facebook page. It involved the thief on the cross.

"How does the thief on the cross fit into your theology? No baptism, no communion, no confirmation, no speaking in tongues, no mission trip, no volunteerism, and no church clothes. He didn't bend his knees to pray. He didn't say the sinner's prayer, and among other things, he was a thief. Jesus didn't take away his pain, heal his body, or smite the scoffers. Yet it was a thief that simply walked into heaven at the same hour as Jesus simply by believing.

That was true for the thief, and it is true for us today. Live in unity, and be prepared to give a defense of the living hope that is within you! **THAT IS THE REASON FOR THE LIVING HOPE THAT IS WITHIN YOU.**

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.

[1] <https://hebrewwordlessons.com/2019/10/27/sheol-the-grave-gehenna-hades-hell/>