

ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER

1 Peter 3:15b

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...”

In this short verse, St. Peter tells us to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us why we have the hope that we have. What is the hope that we have? How can we be always prepared to give an answer? Let's think about these two questions.

I. THE HOPE THAT WE HAVE

Let's read 1 Peter 3:15b. *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”* What is the hope that we have? We talk about our hopes all the time. We all have many hopes and dreams for ourselves here on earth. Why else would we spend four or six years of our life doing homework and cramming for exams? We all want to get a good job after college, drive a nice car, and buy a single family home in the suburbs. It is not wrong for us to have this kind of hopes. However, we should know that these things cannot be our true hope.

This morning we heard Nate's message about Jesus' calling of Peter. Before Peter met Jesus, he only had mundane hopes. His biggest hope each day was for a bigger catch of fish. Every evening he would get in his boat and spend all night fishing. I enjoy watching the show *Deadliest Catch* on the discovery channel. The men on Alaskan fishing boats risk their lives each day on the seas in hopes of a fat paycheck at the end of the season. Peter was the same way. He fought the strong wind of the Sea of Galilee in order to build up his savings account. Many times he came home empty-handed after a long night's work. Then, he met Jesus. Jesus said to him, “From now on you will catch men.” Jesus called him to be one of his disciples. He changed Peter from a hopeless fisherman to a wonderful fisher of men! Peter now had a true hope and purpose in his life. What was this true hope that Peter had in his life? Let us look at 1

Peter 1:3-4. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.* Peter said we are born anew into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus. The fish that Peter caught spoiled quickly. Likewise, all of our hopes in this world for jobs, promotions, cars, fame, and fortune will perish, spoil or fade. They are all dead hopes. But our hope that we have in Jesus is a living hope. God has given us this living hope through Jesus' death and resurrection. The hope of eternal life in the kingdom of God is our living hope that will never perish, spoil or fade.

It was at our Easter conference about five years ago that I received one word on our hope in Jesus. It was from 1 Corinthians 12:22. *For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.* I still remember that verse today and what it means to me practically. My true hope is not about things of this world. My true hope is in Jesus. I have a living hope in the kingdom of God. We cannot take things of this world with us when we die. Bill Gates will have to leave his fortune behind when he dies. But Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was resurrected on the third day so that we might have the hope of eternal life.

Some people may question about the hope we have in Jesus, especially when things are going badly. "Why do such bad things happen to good people?" Many of us may have been in this position at some point in our lives. The summer after I graduated from high school, one of my best friends drowned while swimming at the beach. I struggled to find a reason of why this had to happen. It was through Bible study that I learned God has a plan for each one of us that has already been laid out. People may ask, "Why do you spend so much time studying the Bible?" It is important for us to study the Bible in order to establish a more personal relationship with Jesus. Many Americans go to church on Sunday but that's it. They only hear God's word for about an hour each week. It is hard to have strong faith when you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus. It is important to study the Bible to understand our hope in Jesus. Through Bible study we learn the true hope of eternal life in the Kingdom of God that Jesus gives us.

II. ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER

Let us read verse 15b again. *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...”* Peter tells us to always be prepared to give an answer. Most of us are not like a smooth talking politician or a TV commentator. So how can we prepare ourselves? Tonight we have some great presentations to help us be prepared. But right now, I’d like to focus on some examples that are in the Bible. Many times Jesus was faced by the Jewish leaders with loaded and trick questions. Jesus was always prepared to give them an answer to help them spiritually.

In John 8, Jesus was teaching a crowd in the temple courts when the Pharisees tried to trap him. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. (3-6) The Pharisees challenged Jesus with a question to try and get him to go against the Law of Moses. Jesus answered their challenge by saying, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Jesus was prepared to answer their challenging question. He did not condemn them for what they were trying to do to him. Instead he taught them that sin is sin.

In Luke chapter 20, the teachers of the law were looking for some way to arrest Jesus. They sent spies to ask him about paying taxes to Caesar. They knew that all Jews hated the Roman taxes. They were hoping that Jesus would say it is wrong to pay taxes to Caesar so that they could hand him over to the Roman government. Jesus saw through their plot. He silenced them by saying, *"Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."* Again, Jesus taught them a spiritual lesson. It is proper to pay taxes. Jesus taught them to also give to God what is God's.

The apostle Peter was also prepared to give an answer to difficult questions. When the early church was in turmoil because some Jerusalem church leaders were claiming that one had to be converted to Judaism first before he could be saved in Jesus, Peter got up and said to the elders, "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart,

showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are” (Ac 15:7-11).

It is never easy for us to face the questions of someone who does not know Jesus like we do; someone who does not yet know the hope of eternal life. So how can we be prepared to answer criticism? We should study the word of God deeply. We should not take our Bible studies lightly. It is important to prepare your heart well for Bible study. We need to meditate on the word of God deeply. It is easy for us to just jot down some quick answers to our questions, but we need to take this seriously in order to get the most out of our Bible studies. I have been studying the Bible for over five years now. I know many of the stories in the Bible, but I still have a lot to learn. I am praying to be able to meditate deeply on each passage so that I may more personally receive Jesus’ hope for me. When we know God’s word, we can always be prepared to give an answer. However, no matter how much knowledge we may have, we still need God’s wisdom to answer people who question us. We cannot do this without the Holy Spirit. We should pray that the Holy Spirit may help us and work in the hearts of the people whom we speak with.

Through this verse in 1 Peter, we learn that we should always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that we have. Jesus sets a good example of how to use the word of God to answer tricky questions. Praise Jesus who gives us a living hope in eternal life. May we all pray for the Holy Spirit to help us be prepared to give an answer!