

1 Peter

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1 Peter 3:13-18a

At Christmas time we often see the phrase, "Jesus is the reason for the season." In this section and into Ch. 4, Peter makes the point that Jesus is the reason – period. Whatever season, whatever situation, whatever the question, Jesus is the reason, the answer, the point of it all.

Vss. 13-15a

- Proverbs 22:6 – This is why getting children involved in Sunday School and Wednesday night church activities is so important. Peter here is surely remembering verses from Isaiah he learned as a child: Is. 50:9 and 8:13.
- Like Isaiah, Paul asks in Romans 8:31, "if God is for us, who is against us?" Peter here wants us to see that if we do the things of Jesus, live our lives as a blessing to all people, who would want to harm us? If we "prove zealous": if we live as a Zealot for Christ, if we are *passionate* about living the Christ-like life, then we do not anyone cause to harm us or even criticize us.
- But in the face of evil, Christ Himself suffered. If we then, living His life, are to encounter evil we may well expect suffering. Not all suffering is bad, especially if we suffer for a higher cause. The Continental Army under George Washington, wintering at Valley Forge suffered terribly. They were freezing. Many had no boots or shoes in the deep snow. They were starving, as Congress had made no provisions for a wintered army. Many thought it would be the end of Washington's army. But somehow, they suffered through, month after month, for they knew the consequences of failure and the high cause for which they fought and suffered. How much greater than to suffer for the cause of Christ! (vs. 14)
- So sanctify Christ in your heart. Make a special place for Him there. Be prayed up. Make sure that you know what you believe and make sure that belief is unshakeable.

Vss. 15b-16

- Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 4:2, to be ready to preach the Word “in season and out of season”. In other words, be so familiar with the message of Christ that you are ready to speak the Truth at any time, on any occasion. Peter here is saying the same thing: “Always be ready to make a defense”. This is one of the biggest struggles for modern Christians. Most church members I have known admit to being terrified of being put on the spot to explain why they are Christian. “Let’s go ask my pastor” is a too common best answer. I am amazed at how often people who have been in Sunday School and church for decades STILL cannot make a good defense of their faith if put on the spot with no preparation. We have to be intentional about AT LEAST being able to give a 30-second elevator speech on “Why I am a Christian”.
- But in that defense **HOW** we say it is as important, maybe more important, than what we have to say. If we get immediately defensive, go into attack mode, and speak with an angry tone with an air of superiority, the very people we are trying to win are going to click us off, never hearing a word we say.
- We are to speak with gentleness, like a reasonable person. No one is ever bullied into salvation. We speak with love. We speak with a calm and gentle spirit. It doesn’t matter how ignorant the person we are speaking to, or how irritating. Love is patient. Love is kind. And this is how we are to make a defense of the faith.
- We are to speak with reverence. Too often people who are genuinely concerned about reaching the lost for Christ are willing to take a less than reverent approach. The Father and the Son are humanized too much. The miraculous and the exclusive claims of the gospel are watered down at best, if not utterly excluded. Asking people to believe in a savior who is less than the savior of Scripture is like trying to pass off a fake for the genuine article. As God hears our defense, we must remember that HE is our #1 audience.

- Reading between Peter's lines all along in this letter, he is certainly saying that the Christian life well and openly lived is the best defense and the best argument for faith in Christ. Here in vs. 16 he says plainly that such a life will render any slander to be foolish.

Vss. 17-18a

- An old Nike slogan was "Be like Mike", referring to Michael Jordan, and by inference, his line of Nike shoes. Here Peter is saying that when we think of suffering, "Be like Jesus". For if God should will it so, that we are to suffer for righteousness, then we would be well to remember the example of Jesus. If we are to suffer unjustly for our faith, we must remember that we are only walking where Jesus had already walked.
- We need to remember also that our suffering does not reach the higher nobility of Christ's suffering. He died to take away the sins of the world, a deed done only once, never to be redone (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 9:28).
- Christ died for the just and unjust. This is key for us. If we are to suffer it is always easier to suffer for good people. But Christ hung around the un-good people a great deal. He died for all. So it may be that we too will be asked by God to suffer for the un-good, so that they may be brought to God. This was the act of the priest in the story of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. The convict Val Jean had threatened his and then robbed him, but the priest was willing to forgive all and bear the pain of the theft in order to bring Val Jean to God.