

“Be Ready to Defend Your Hope”  
(1 Peter 3:14-17)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

So far,

John Knox has reminded us

That our Lord calls us to be courageous

For Him and His cause.

Fear is a powerful enemy we need to overcome:

We never gain anything through fear – we always lose.

Just look back over your life,

And see that everything worthwhile

You’ve ever achieved by God’s grace

Has come from having courage.

That’s why the Lord wants us to be strong –

Why He says to us as He did to Joshua,

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (1:9).

That’s also why He’s given us His Spirit so that we might be:

Paul says, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7).

John Bunyan reminded us

That there’s only way we can be courageous:

By persevering in our fight against our enemies –

Our flesh, the world, and the devil.

These all really have one goal:

To resist God's work in our souls by His Spirit –

To weaken us and take away our courage.

The way they do this

Is by drawing our minds and hearts after this world.

If they can succeed –

Though they can't destroy us –

They can at least cripple us:

If the world is really what we want

We'll always hesitate to follow Jesus,

Because we'll be afraid of losing it.

That's why we must fight against it.

And John Newton reminded us

Why we should fight this battle,

Try to overcome our enemies,

And grow in our courage to do the Lord's work:

Because Jesus loved us so much

That He was willing to fight for us:

He was willing to go to the cross

To pay for our sins,

To free us from the devil's power and hell,

That He might bring us to heaven.

He fought for us,

And now He calls us to fight for Him.

## B. Preview.

Today, we're going to look at our next hero:

A very well known preacher

By the name of Charles Spurgeon.

Spurgeon will show us

Why we need this courage –

What our goal or purpose is:

That we might take His Gospel

To a world that is perishing.

That's what the Lord calls us to do this morning,

Through the apostle Peter.

## II. Sermon.

### A. Here is one place –

Among many in Scripture –

Where our Lord calls us to evangelize:

To tell as many as we can

The Good News of what Jesus has done

To save all who will believe and receive Him.

Peter writes in verse 15, “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

He first calls us to *sanctify* Christ as Lord in our hearts.

Sanctify means to “make holy” or to “set apart” –

Our hearts are to be set apart for Him.

The flesh, the world, and the devil

Are not to have control of our hearts:

Jesus must have that control –

That’s what spiritual warfare is all about:

Overcoming those enemies

That seek to take over our hearts.

Jesus must have our hearts.

In other words,

Peter is telling us

That we should have only one purpose:

To obey Him –

To do whatever He calls us to do.

He points to one area in particular:

That we would be ready

To defend our hope

To everyone who asks us.

What is that hope?

It's not that we can go to heaven if we're good enough –  
Paul says, "There is none righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3:10).

It's not that we can be reconciled to God  
If we come through the right religious organization –  
The Lord hasn't deposited His salvation  
In any institution.

It's the hope  
That we are saved by God's grace,  
Received by faith alone –  
That the Lord is willing  
To save anyone who will come to Him  
Through faith in His Son, Jesus,  
And in that way alone.

How often are we to defend it?  
At all times and in all places:  
Whenever He gives us the opportunity.  
We should always be ready  
Because we don't know  
When He might bring someone  
Who needs to hear this message across our path.  
How many times have we lost opportunities

Because we weren't ready?

How does Peter tell us to defend it?

Not in the self-righteous way of the Pharisees,

Who were unwilling to interact with those who needed it

Because they were unclean –

Too far beneath their dignity;

But with the gentleness of love –

Love for our neighbor who is danger;

Love for the Lord

Who saved us from a worse condition –

And with the fear

That comes from knowing the danger they're in

And the wrath they will face

If they don't hear and respond in faith to Jesus.

Peter tells us

We should be ready to do this

Whenever someone asks.

But why would anyone ask us to do this?

He assumes they will

Because he also assumes we will be doing

What the Lord has called us to do:

Share the Gospel.

When we share it with others,  
They will naturally ask questions –  
One being,  
“Can you prove what you’re saying is true?”  
“Can you give me something more  
Than this is what you’ve chosen to believe?”  
Peter is simply telling us  
We need to be ready to answer.

How can we answer this question?  
We need to understand why we believe,  
And share our reasons with them:  
It’s really that simple.  
What did Paul do to prove the Gospel  
When he stood before Felix, Festus and King Agrippa?  
He shared his testimony.  
And along with it,  
He proclaimed the Gospel.  
That’s what the Lord is calling us to do  
Through the apostle Peter.

B. Is there anything else we should be ready to do?

Yes – we should be ready to suffer.

The people Jesus sends us to are His enemies –  
They're not going to like what we have to say.  
They don't think they need to be saved.  
They think they're alright on their own –  
That God will let them into heaven as they are.  
We need to tell them that He won't;  
That "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23);  
That there are eternal consequences for their sins;  
And that they'll receive those consequences  
Unless they turn from their sins and trust in Jesus.

When we tell them these things,  
They may push back,  
And we may have to suffer.  
How can we be ready for this?

Peter writes, "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you* are blessed. **AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED**" (v. 14).

The first step is knowing that it's going to happen,  
So that it doesn't catch us by surprise.

The second is not being afraid  
Of the possibility of suffering:

Peter says, "Do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled."

Remember, nothing good comes from fear –



At least from the fear the man.

Fear paralyzes us;

It keeps us from doing

What our Lord calls us to do.

Remember what will happen

If we don't share the truth with them:

We might spare ourselves a little bit of suffering,

But we will leave them in a position

Where they might suffer forever.

Remember that our Lord wants us to reach them.

He tells us that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11).

He wants them to turn from their sins

And be reconciled to Him through His Son.

Since we have His Spirit living in our hearts,

Shouldn't we want the same thing?

Shouldn't the love of God

Compel us to reach out to them?

Let's also not forget

That it's a blessing to suffer

That we might bring honor to our Lord.

Peter writes, "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you* are blessed" (v. 14).

He later writes, “But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you” (4:13-14).

Our Lord does His greatest works

Through the sufferings of His people –

Consider what Jesus accomplished

Through His sufferings on the cross.

What He did through Paul’s sufferings,

And that of all His apostles.

Which of the heroes that we’ve looked at

Didn’t have to suffer in their Lord’s work?

If we would be useful to the Lord,

We must be willing to endure He calls us to endure,

Knowing that if we do, we are blessed.

Peter doesn’t want us to forget as well,

That the only suffering that counts

Is that which we don’t deserve.

He writes in verses 16-17, “And keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”

#### C. Finally, where will we find the strength

To share the good news

Knowing we will suffer for it?

Not in ourselves: but only in Christ.

He doesn't call us to do this work on our own –

He has made every provision for us:

He went to the cross to cleanse our hearts.

He has given us power through His Spirit.

He has given us His Word

So that we'll know how to do the work

From a life that honors Him.

He has given us His promises

So that asking in faith

We might receive His help.

And He has told us

That He will be with us in all we do for Him,

And grant us success.

The work will always seem daunting,

When we look only at our own resources:

But not if we look to His.

Let's make sure

We look to Him often.

When Charles Spurgeon was once asked

What the secret was to his ministry,

He didn't point to his calling,

His ability to communicate,  
His photographic memory,  
Or his devotion to Jesus;  
He pointed to those  
Who continually looked to Jesus  
On his behalf in prayer –  
That's what we need  
To be doing for ourselves and each other.  
If we're not praying and seeking the Lord  
For His grace and strength every day,  
We shouldn't be surprised  
If we don't find His power.

The Table reminds us this morning  
That everything we need is in Jesus –  
That He went to the cross,  
To give us the power we need to serve Him.  
Let's look to Him now for His help,  
As we prepare to come.

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