

**Journey With Hope Series**

**Becoming An Ever-Ready Christian**

**1 Peter 3:13-17**

Wednesday, April 23, 2003 • Dr. David McKinley

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I love Leno Lopaz and always look forward to every time that he is going to play for us. God's given him a great gift and a..., he uses that gift to encourage a..., people through music. I've had him, many times, play at Power Lunch and a..., that's always a joy when he comes and does that for us and a..., we just love him and thank God for him and for his life and his wonderful spirit and letting God use him in such a great way. And a..., as we come together tonight, I know we've come together to talk, to pray and to lift up the Lord and I just feel like the greatest thing that we have to say tonight is just that God answers prayer, because as we filled this altar area last Wednesday evening with people who came with burdens, with prayers and just asking God to pour out His Spirit on our church, I don't think any of us could have imagined a..., what all would happen in the course of this past weekend and a..., from the Saturday evening service that was just a..., you know just a, a wonderful full service and then Sunday morning the sunrise service, over 8,000 people at the stadium and then 2 services here. Frankly we had 8,000 there and I thought we're gonna come to church and we're not gonna have very many people here but a..., the totals of the day were somewhere near 25,000 people in all the combined worship services and [applause] just an incredible, incredible weekend. But obviously the issue is that each of those numbers, represent lives and many of those lives have stories and living testimonies of the work of God in them and it has been an incredible thing to see and to hear. We did have over a hundred a..., recorded commitments and decisions this past weekend and so that's been a part of just the a..., outflow of the weekend and it's just been incredible and I know we all give thanks to God. But I wanna thank you. I wanna thank you for praying. I wanna thank you for being a part a..., I wanna thank you just for the many ways that a..., you have been uplifting a..., the ministry of the church, your pastor, your staff in these days and in just seeing God work in and through all of that and a..., Rick thank you guys for tonight. You guys always do a great job. Can you just say thank you to our praise team tonight? [applause] I always thank the Lord for these folds. They're just like you they're busy working in the course of the day, they have to get here extra early on Wednesday and to get ready and prep for this evening time but they always do a great job of leading us and I appreciate that so very much.

How many of you have ever done something or said something where you immediately knew that you needed to try to correct it, take it back or to make an apology? How many of you have ever done that? Good! I'm grateful we've got a group of honest people here tonight so that's a great thing to see and to hear. A... one of the things that happens in life is that as you're going through life many times mistakenly and unintentionally you cross a boundary, you say something, you slip up, you do something you didn't necessarily intended to do and there are...there's an outflow, there's consequences that come and sometimes you want to take it back but you can't.

It's like a guy that I read about and it's really a, a favorite for me. A guy who sent an e-mail and he simply wrote in to that little a... box, you know, there on the top of the e-mail, "Sorry, my sincerest apology, wrong address." He was trying to take it back. Have you ever done that? Have you ever been typin an e-mail and hit that stroke, sent it and thought, "Oh, my goodness I just sent it to the wrong person." wrong time? Well, let me just give you a little bit of background about why he did that. The man that did this was actually a... waiting for his wife to join him. They'd been working for several weeks trying to make plans for a trip to Florida together, to get some time away and to enjoy some down time, some vacation time but they were struggling with coordinating their schedules and frankly with the fare schedules and you know what that's like if you've ever played airline fare wars. Your tryin to fine the cheapest flight and the time to fly and all that. So they finally decided that he would go a day early and she would come a day later. And so he went and he got there and he found that everything was wonderful as they planned the trip and so he got there set up his laptop, decided to send a quick message back home and a..., he did that but he mistakenly typed the wrong address when he sent it. What he did not know was that the address that he sent it to was a lady who had just been widowed. Her husband had been a pastor, she had been to the funeral, he had gone home to be with the Lord suddenly and unexpectedly and when she came in from the funeral that day she checked the e-mail to see about contacts from friends and relatives and church members. But this is what the e-mail said:

"To my loving wife from your departed husband."

Subject: I've arrived.

Message: I arrived and have just checked in. I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. [pause for slight congregation laughter] Looking forward to seeing you then. Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was.

P.S. It sure is hot down here! [laughs]

[pause for congregation laughter]

Well, he didn't know who he'd sent it to, he just knew he needed to correct it. But you can only imagine the impact that must have caused on the other end of that message. And sometimes in life when you're goin through life and you're tryin to do the right thing and do the best thing,

you do the wrong thing and in the most sincere fashion you feel like you just need to say, I'm sorry, I apologize, I didn't mean to do it. Sincere apology. And other times in life we apologize and frankly our apology is not all that sincere. Have you ever made your kids apologize to each other? I'm tellin you, if you're a parent in this room and you've ever had your kids get in conflict, one of the stupidest things that you ever do is look at your kids and say, "Now you say I'm sorry!" And they'll go, "I'm sorry!" [pause for slight congregation laughter] And you don't believe it and the other kid doesn't believe it and nobody believes it. But it's an insincere apology and the fact of the matter is, is when we hear the word apology, to be honest, most of the time that's what comes to mind. A sincere apology or an insincere apology but the idea for most of us is that an apology, if we were to think about it, were to define it, is some sort of an expression of a regret for a fault. It is in actuality an expression of concern and a desire to restore and when I say I apologize many times what I mean is that I have a concern, there's a fault, I need to restore what is wrong and that become my definition of an apology. But did you know that if you look in the dictionary that, that is the number 2 definition for the word apology. That's the one we know about, that's the one we connect with, that's the one that we're most often engaged in, an expression of concern, a desire to restore. But do you know what the number 1 definition of an apology is in the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary? It's actually this:

*"A formal defense of an idea or a doctrine."*

Do you ever think that when you think of an apology, of being a formal defense of an idea or of a doctrine? No, most of us don't because in the world in which we've lived the idea of an apology, whether it is sincere or insincere is simply the effort to try to make right something that was made wrong. But from the context of what the real meaning of the word is, the real meaning has to do with the defense, with some means or some effort to try to present and idea or a doctrine that is right, that is good, that is purposeful and that is exactly the meaning and the use of the word as we find it in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 3 in verse 15 tonight. That's why I took time to talk to you about the word, cause I want you to see it. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 3 and verse 15. We're actually gonna begin reading in verse 13 in just a moment. But in the realm of faith and in our walk with Christ an apology takes on a very different meaning then the meaning that we so often think of today. And the meaning that we find is the one that is expressed here. So I wanna begin reading in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 3 and in verse 13. The Bible says:

*<sup>13</sup>And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?  
<sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed.  
 "and do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."  
<sup>15</sup>But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense...*

That little phrase, give a defense, it literally means, the word that is used there in the original Greek language is the word, "aplogia" literally always be ready to give apology and the idea of the apology is the primary

use, even in our dictionary today, it is

*...always be willing to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear; <sup>16</sup>having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. <sup>17</sup>For it is better, if it is...*

What? Say it out loud.

*...the will of God,*

*...it is better, if it is the will of God,...*

This passage of Scripture's talking about the will of God. Many of us want to know about the will of God. Here it is:

*...it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.*

Let me give you that one verse, verse 15 in the amplified version, you can look at the screen. It says:

*But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy and acknowledge Him as Lord. Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you, but do it courteously and respectfully.*

The Bible says that we need to learn to apologize and that all of our apologies are to done in the realm of sincerity. The purpose for our apology in the world, in the life and the realm in which we are living is not because we have done something wrong, necessarily, but because we need, in the wrong of this world to state with truth what is right about God, what is right about His word and what is right about real things and that is a part of what we are called to do and to be as followers of Jesus Christ. So let me make just quick...quickly if I may 4 preliminary statements in the realm of faith about the subject of apology; 4 thoughts, 4 statements.

Number 1:

An apology is not a retreat to mend a wrong but rather a logical defense for the basis of our belief. An apology is not a retreat to mend a wrong. But instead it is a logical defense for the basis of our belief and God calls every one of us who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ to be willing and eager and ready to make a defense for our faith.

Secondly:

Let me be sure that I point this out. Good arguments will never overcome unbelief. Just because you live for Christ and you speak for Christ and you may speak to defend the faith for Christ that does not mean that that defense, even in it's finest most logical presentation and most persuasive effort will ultimately turn the tide of unbelief. Belief is an issue of

the heart; it's not an issue of the mind, it's an issue of the heart. And you see anything that I can talk you into or anybody else can talk you into, somebody else can talk you out of. And what our job is as followers of Christ and witnesses for Him is not to be a group of people who simply can become so articulate, so suave, so persuasive that we can turn a phrase or turn the minds of people and that we can tangle them up. The reality is that even a good answer will not change unbelief. Only the Spirit of God can change a heart. And in everything that we do in living for Christ and being witnesses for Him in this generation we must deal with the issue that only by the power of the Spirit working through my life and your life are the hearts of people around us changed.

Number 3: Apologetics, or an apologetic is not for an intellectual Christians but for all sincere followers of Christ. When I talk to you about biblical apologetics and the idea of offering an apology for your faith, meaning a reasonable, logical defense for your faith, I'm not talking about just a group of people who are intellectual believers. We have some incredible minds and have had through the course of Christian history that have been able to offer wonderful resources and writings that are of great benefit to each and every one of us. If you've never read and been exposed to some of the writings of C. S. Lewis a..., that is a, an author that you need to know and become familiar with, in particular his book called, *Mere Christianity*, a wonderful statement of faith and something of great value. The writings today of Robbie Zacharias, who is a marvelous thinker. Hank Hannagray who has been here to our church and has spoken in the past, who's known as *The Bible Answer Man*, BAM, and BAM, BAM, as we call him, The Bible Answer Man. And in fact there on the front of your worship guide tonight you'll notice a, a... quick reference to [www.equip.org](http://www.equip.org) which is his website and on that website if you ever have questions about philosophical issues and those kinds of things a..., it's a great place to go to get some answers and you can just simply go in there, there're a series of, of questions and answers that are there on a variety of moral and ethical subjects and you can pick those up. And so he's a wonderful apologist. Dr. D. James Kennedy from down in Coral Ridge a..., from Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, down in Fort Lauderdale, Florida has written a number of books on, on a... the truths that transform and the things that we believe. And then even a member of our church here, Josh McDowell, who's spoken to many young people on university campuses through the years has a recent book out called, *Beyond Belief* and it deals with the issue of post modernity and all of the issues involved in that and what you can think about and do. Wonderful minds! But please hear me, you don't have to be Robbie or Josh or C. S. Lewis; if you're a follower of Christ God wants to use your life, your faith and your witness to provide a logical defense for the gospel.

Finally:

Apologetics, finally in the introduction, just so you'll relax. [pause for slight congregation laughter] Apologetics address the denials, distortions and distinctives of the Christian faith. Apologetics, when we talk about the realm of apologetics, we're talking about addressing the denials, the distortions, the distinctives of the Christian faith and this is such an

essential issue in the day and the hour in which we are living. There's been a lot of stuff in print and on the media and airways in recent days because of the convergence of significant religious holidays. In fact one of the most significant was on Sunday evening there was a, a... Larry King broadcast under the subject, *Seeking Meaning In The Aftermath Of War*, and on the particular evening they were talking about the aftermath of war and whether or not faith could heal and they had a rather interesting panel. They had a..., Depak Chopra, who of course a..., is a spiritual advisor and, and, and a New Age mystic. They had John MacArthur, who's the pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California. They had Rabbi Harold Kushner, a..., a best selling author. Father Michael Manning, a Roman Catholic Priest and then they had Dr. Mayer Hathout, who is a scholar of Islam and senior advisor in the Muslim public affairs council. And a... as they opened the discussion on Sunday evening they said, this is a very spiritual time for Christians because of Easter and Jews because of the Passover and in Iraq because of the Shiite Muslims who are a..., reviving their annual pilgrimages to the holy places and a..., they began to discuss that and to talk about it and as Larry as such a gentle and gracious way to do it he went on and just said a..., he just kinda jumped into the conversation and said, "Now all these things have gone on, all these conflicts in the history of the world have gone on in the name of God. How do you explain it?" And so they started this "Round Robin" of debate and of discussion and it didn't take very long until it moved from the discussion of how war effects the world until how belief ultimately effects opinion and the result of that is that ultimately we have to establish what is the criteria for going to Heaven or going to Hell? And so it got to John MacArthur and they simply asked him the question, Larry King did, "Don't you think that all faiths breach peace, because faith creates conflict?" and MacArthur said a..., "Yes it's true that faith breaches peace." He said, "But what you always have to ask is what kind of faith?" I mean just to talk about faith, as a generic commodity doesn't have any virtue at all. When we talk about faith as Christians, we're talking about the faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And he began to define and to seek to articulate the issue of what is... **< turn tape >** ...and yet this entire a..., transcript that I hold in my hand is nothing but a, a bunch of verbal bantering about the fact that it's okay for everybody to believe something as long as you don't try to define it. Believe anything you want to, just don't define it. And MacArthur was the lone voice in this whole discussion that night to say, it's impossible to say that faith is real if faith cannot be defined. Because real faith has real definition and ultimately real faith creates conflict and issue and opinion. That same issue hit the front page of the *Dallas Morning News* just yesterday. Yesterday morning on the headline of the paper there was the issue of, of American Airlines here in our community going forward, but then there's this whole inset article. Are aide packages Christian charity or a US crusade? And there was a significant amount of accusation and suspicion and a significant amount of criticism from Islamic scholars for Christian believers and in particular, Southern Baptists, for the fact that we are undertaking that task to create humanitarian aide and supplies for the Iraqi peoples and that all of that is being done in an effort to bring conversion and evangelism and all of those things. Well, I know we

say, Amen, to that. But let me say to you that the a..., that the Muslim scholars are not happy about that and the tragedy is, is that they're willing to continue to malign the issue of the people in order to be able to criticize and to point to the fault of the Christian faith and yet it is the desire of Christians to offer people help in the name of Christ. And while we may not go forward with just a straight frontal witness for Christ, it is undeniable that if we express our faith through love for others, the people will receive a witness of Christ. And so I say all of that to say that faith defines the character of who you are and what you believe and you have to know that about your faith. And if you do...cannot define your faith so as to understand it's character in the essence of what you believe then the ultimate issue is, is that you really don't believe anything. That's what's wrong with our world today. We are caught up in non-belief belief; a belief that believes nothing. We're just caught up in belief as something, but that can be defined as nothing. If I haven't lost you yet, just stay with me, I'll keep tryin, okay? I say all that to say that tonight I want us just to briefly think about the subject of what it means to *Become An Ever-Ready Christian*, because Peter here says that if you're a follower of Christ you've got to live in the ever-ready mode. Because not everybody is going to affirm and applaud what you seek to do as a Christ follower living for Him in this day and in this hour. And so I believe there are some imperatives, there are some challenges, there are some commands that need to be personalized in my life and in your life tonight if we are indeed to be the ever-ready Christians that are intended to be biblical Christians according to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Scripture. He says in verse 13:

<sup>13</sup>...who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?

<sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."

He literally says, if you're gonna an every-ready Christian you have to be **READY FOR ACTION**. I have to be ready for action. The word follower that is used there in that verse 13 is actually the Greek word "zelotes" zealot. And he says that if you indeed are a follower of Christ, literally, you are to be a zealot for what is good and your life is to live in the on go mode, to do good things for the benefit of others. You know even corporate American has realized the need today to change the essence and the character of who they are by adding a variety of different types of good works to their bottom line. They've decided it's okay to have profits but you need to have some profit sharing. It's common today, if you check out at certain retail stores, that they're gonna ask you if you'd like to make a contribution. It may be to a March Of Dimes or to a Cancer Society or to a Community Project, but many companies have done these kinds of things. In fact WalMart has adopted a, a byline that simply says, "Good Works." I keep imagining that some guy was sittin in a Baptist church over in Arkansas one morning and the preacher was preachin on good works and the guy took it and made a fortune with WalMart in the marketing company, gettin that word out there because that's the Bible. Good works! Once Christ is in us then we want to live in an active mode of being people who

do good and whose works reflect the goodness of the God whom we love and whom we serve. And so the result of that is that the Christian faith is an active faith, it is not a passive belief. It is impossible to truly believe on the name of Christ and be passive about the issues and the needs of people around you. We are called to action. We are engaged in duty and regardless of what that may bring to my life it is the confidence that when my life is lived on purpose for God that I will experience the presence and the power of God in my life. That's why the Bible says in the book of Isaiah chapter 50 and verse 9:

*Behold, the Lord will aide me and who will harm me?...*

I don't live my life wondering how to...I can avoid the issue of trouble or conflict because I've been called to do good and even if what I am called to do in good brings conflict with others, criticism, skepticism, it does not matter because I am to do the will of God. It's what every missionary who ever goes to a mission field embraces in their heart. They determine that regardless of whether they are received and embraced or rejected and persecuted that ultimately they are going to do the will of God. And I guess the message that I'm trying to give you is that you and I are to live ready for action and doing good can put us in harms way. We're always spending time as parents warning our children about the dangers of doing bad because it can put you in harms way. But please hear me tonight, doing good can put you in harms way. Because there will be days in your life and in my life when seeking to do what is good is ultimately going to be criticized and maligned and rejected by others and that's not an easy thing for us to accept but it's true. You see, Rome, ancient Rome was a society that had hostility and suspicion towards Christians and they ultimately persecuted the very Christians who taught and the Christians who supported praying for their leaders and supporting their government. It's a fascinating thing to read and to study. So don't get the idea that if you do what is good and right towards others that you're gonna be applauded, the reality is you may be persecuted and if you need an example just take your finger, move from verse 17 to verse 18 and look at what it says:

*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.*

Jesus did good and Jesus was rejected. But he said to us in the words that we've been studying just recently on Sundays, Matthew chapter 5 and verse 10:

*"Blessed are those of you who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for yours is the kingdom of heaven."*

So being an every-ready Christian simply means that I am ready for action and I realize that I'm not going to disengage, but I'm going to engage every day as I live my life and I have one aim; to do all the good I can to all the people I can for as long as I ever can until God takes me home



to heaven. Those were the words of John Wesley, that was his passion in life.

Secondly, not only being an ever-ready Christian means that I'm ready for action, it also means **I'M READY TO ANSWER**. I'm ready to give an answer for my life and for my faith. It says here in...again in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 3 and verse 15, that we are to sanctify the Lord in our hearts and then we're to be ready to give a defense. I love the fact that it talks about that this defense has gotta come from the inside out. When the Bible talks about our heart, the Bible's talking about the place of our deepest emotion, the places where fears and anxieties gather. It's where you feel pressure on the inside and...and discomfort when you begin to feel threatened. The Bible is literally saying in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:15, let Jesus be a peace keeping force in your heart. And when you are active in the world and when you're doing good, whenever you have an opportunity you are to give an answer for the faith that you have in Jesus Christ. Every day I'm to live ready to give an answer, an answer for Jesus. Can you do that? Can I do that? I have to tell you I never do it without fear and trembling. I've been to seminary, I've earned degrees, I've studied the Scripture, but I have to tell you to this day I never am called to give an answer that I don't feel the butterflies in my stomach and the tension in my gut and the uncertainty as to whether I'm gonna step the right way or the wrong way and how I'll be perceived and what will be said. You know why? Because that's human. It's not whether you're a pastor or in the business world or a teacher or it's just being human. We fear rejection. We fear un...the uncertainty of making the wrong statement. But you see the issue is not that, the issue is that I am simply before God, it's the God I live to give an answer and I want to answer for the faith, I want to give an apology, I want to speak with courage and boldness for the name of Jesus. So how am I to be ready to give an answer? Well, obviously, if I'm going to give an answer for my faith in Christ I need to know my faith. Ha! One of the reasons so many of us never say anything is cause we're not really sure about what we know. But the secret to giving the answer for Christ is seeking to grow day by day as a Christ follower so that you will know the faith and the foundation of faith is the Bible, the Word of God. The Bible is what gives definition. The Bible is what gives explanation and example of what real faith is. That's why we as Christians constantly talk about the Bible, the Bible, the Bible; cause you can't separate faith and the Bible. The Bible is the evidence, the record of what God has done in history, in time, for eternity and it's what gives us the record by which we put our faith and confidence in Christ. I don't just believe some mystical, mysterious, myth about a Jesus who lived 2000 years ago; I believe there is a record book, facts and history and it's the truth of this book that gives fiber and strength to the meaning of my faith. The bottom line is that a vague faith is just plain hard to defend and if you don't know what it is you can't defend it and so it's vital that we understand our beliefs and the basis of our belief system. And too many of us though we have many Bibles still have a shallow belief. Now, let's just settle 2 things that we need to know tonight, okay, 2 things that we need to know.

Number 1: Hand in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3, flip back to the book of Acts chapter 4 in

verse 12. I just wanna be sure that you **KNOW** that this is in the Bible, okay, this isn't just somethin, somethin I'm talkin about, let's just talk about what the Bible says here on, on 2 matters. Act chapter 4 and verse 12, page 1108 in my Bible. [pause] The Bible says:

*"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be..."*

What?

*...saved."*

One way, there's only one way, it's what the Bible says. I didn't say that. I didn't make that up. That's what God's Word says.

*"Neither is there salvation in any other, there's no other name given under heaven by which you must be saved."*

Why does the Bible say that? Well, let's go from Acts 4 to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 15, Acts 4 to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 15. Pastor was all over this text on Sunday. I just wanna go back to it. Chapter 15, verse 3, the Scripture says, Paul is speaking here:

*For I delivered to you first of all that which I received:...*

Paul is saying I didn't make this up, this is something I've received:

*...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and then was seen by Cephas,...*

That is Peter.

*...by the twelve and then seen by over five hundred...*

Eye witnesses at once...this is the message, this is the essence, this is what Christianity is about. Why does this little message, the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ matter? Look down in verse 12:

*<sup>12</sup>...if Christ is preached that He has been raised...raised from the dead how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>But if there is no resurrection..., then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.*

I don't have one bloomin thing to say if Jesus isn't alive and you don't have one single thing to believe if Jesus isn't alive. Preaching is vain, faith is vain.

*<sup>15</sup>Yes, and we are found false witnesses...*

We're not witnesses, we are false witnesses the Bible says...

*...because we testified of God, that He raised up Christ, who He did not raise—if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup>And if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile;...*

And one more thing...

*...you're still in your sins.*

There is no hope for humanity cause nothing can change man from the inside out. Everything that is evil in this world is evil in man and there's no hope. And by the way, everybody who's fallen asleep in Christ has perished. Just write it down, you're dead, you're gone, that's it! It's true, there's no alternative here, either Jesus is alive and we have hope for heaven or Jesus is dead and there is no hope. And if in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most pitiful. We're a miserable lot, if this is just some sort of a let's make it up so we feel better when we die. I think that's pretty emphatic, don't you? I think the Bible's pretty clear. Neither is there salvation in any other for there's no other name given under heaven wh...whereby we must be saved. Why would the Bible say that? Because there's only one person who ever came, lived, died and rose again; His name is Jesus. If Jesus is alive then He's the only way to heaven and if Jesus is dead then choose any way you wanna go because there is no heaven and that's what the Bible says. You see the Bible doesn't play with the words of world religion, the Bible just says it's one faith and it's the one faith that was once for all delivered to the saints and we have to know that faith.

That's why Benjamin Warfield who lived over a hundred years ago said:

*"The word of the living God is our soul assurance that there has been a redemptive work exercised by God in the world. Just in proportion as our confidence in this worl...word shall wane, in just that proportion shall we lose our hold upon the fact of a redemptive work of God in the world."*

Every man chooses his own way because God has not made a way. I've gotta know the faith.

And then yes, I have to **DEFEND** the faith. Now, when I speak of defending the faith I'm not saying that you have to go around always offending with the faith. Heh! Too many believers have gotten the idea that to defend the faith is just to dig in get mad and get a...get their teeth grit and just get ready to punch somebody for Jesus. [pause for slight congregation laughter] You know? God doesn't want you to do that. Don't ever get the idea that what God wants you to do is just to be some mean angry, you know, I shall not be moved is your theme song. [pause for slight congregation laughter] You know, and just this whole idea that you're gonna go through life just lookin for a way to, you know, be the defender. No, to defend the faith is simply to give a logical defina...ition and explanation for what you believe. I believe what I believe because I believe that there is a record. I believe that that record has evidence. I

believe that that evidence is worthy of consideration. I believe that what I've considered has brought me to a conclusion and that has made the difference in my life and therefore it's not a hodge-podge, it's a system of belief and a system of faith that is rooted and grounded in the word of God. In Jude chapter 3...or excuse me there are no chapters in Jude. In Jude verse 3, the Bible simply says, is it there?

*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*

God wants us to understand that giving an answer means knowing the faith and defending that faith, by letting what we know and understand to be true of God and of His Word, to be something that we can share and something that we can explain to others.

And then we gotta **SHARE** the faith. To give an answer, not only means to know it and to defend it, it means that I'm willing to share it. And I share it in such a way as to simply be a witness for Christ. In fact I have actually been given very specific directions as to how I'm to share it. It says:

*...sanctify the Lord God in your heart,...*

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:15:

*...and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that you have in you with meekness and fear.*

The Bible says, the way you're to share your faith is with meekness; that is with gentleness and with fear. That literally means with respect, with respect for another person. Our goal in sharing our faith is not just to disrespect everybody but it is to do it with gentleness and with faith but we are sharing the one thing that we have in Christ and it is hope. All of Christianity can be summarized in that word, HOPE! Because if Christ lives there is hope and it's all about the hope that we have in Him. You guys aren't listening fast enough tonight. I'm so disappointed in you for that. Being an ever-ready Christian means I'm ready for action, it's means I'm ready to answer...

And then it means **I'M READY IN ATTITUDE**. It means that I'm living my life with one attitude. What is that attitude? To do the will of God no matter what it costs, no matter what may come; I will do the will of God. I love the fact that the Bible talks here about having a good conscience. It's an attitude from the inside-out that says that I am going to live my life with a pure spirit before God and whatever people may think of me or whatever people may say of me or whatever resistance I may face I am going to do good, I'm going to live ready for action, I'm gonna to live ready with an answer, but I'm gonna live with a ready attitude that says that even if I am defamed as an evil doer for doing what is good in Christ, if it's the will of God that I suffer for doing good, I will do good. I will

not fear evil. I will not revert to evil. I will have an attitude, but above all else will trust that God is working in and through my life for His purpose, for His honor, for His glory. I'm so limited by my humanity and yet He is so able to use weak, frail humans to do incredible, eternal things. And I never cease to be amazed how God shows His hand in our lives time and time again. It happens every week, in big ways and in small ways. Obviously for those of us who've known Christ we've known the power of Christ to come in and to change us. But the amazing thing when you're living for Christ is living with an attitude of expectancy that believes that God is going to use you for His glory.

Bill Borenstein, where are you sitting tonight? Come up here and join me just a minute. Bill Borenstein's a man that I love very much in the life, the ministry of our church. He's involved in spearheading a lot of this project that coming on line over here a... next door, an incredible life story, an incredible life journey. Several years ago, a man who grew up in the Jewish tradition a..., came to a Christmas Eve candle light service here at Prestonwood and heard about Jesus and realized that maybe religious tradition of any expression was not sufficient if it didn't have definition and Bill became a follower of Christ and lives his life to seek to be an ever-ready Christian. But just last week Bill had an experience of being reminded that when he lives as an ever-ready Christian that God uses people like that in unique ways and moments. Tell em what happened here last Wednesday.

Last Wednesday when we a... came to the altar to pray and it was just an awesome time for those of you that were here. A... I helped pass out some of the prayer cards and there was one left in my hand and I looked down at it and I was stunned because the name on the card was a woman, it was a prayer from a woman who a... about 4 and a half years ago, Pam, my wife had a..., helped confirm her faith in Christ, they had prayed for her to receive Christ and she was praying for her husband a..., that he would receive Christ on this card. And what stunned me was a... 4 and a half years ago a... we had spent some time with them and a... he just, he wasn't ready and just through the busyness of my life a..., a..., I stopped praying for him. A... but when I looked at that card I was just stunned because here 4 and a half years later she was still prayin for him and I was very much convicted by the fact that a..., I needed to call, call him and call her and so I a... ended up callin her a... this week, a... this last week and a... the first, you know I, I told her that I'd picked up the prayer card and that I read it and a..., she just stopped and she said, this is answer to prayer. She says, "I've been praying for somebody that would be willing to intervene on, on his behalf and a... pray with him." And so we talked and then I a..., I called him and we a..., reacquainted ourselves and a... we're getting together next week, but it, it just, it struck me because a... I was humbled by the fact that a..., here I had stopped praying for this man, yet I saw a..., her wife...his wife was not willing to stop praying and would continue on to pray and, and a God, God as least at this point is a..., using me in this and so it's a..., it's an awesome opportunity.

But I think the most fascinating thing is that a man just made a walk to

an altar to pray and it just happened that he happened to pick up the card of a man whom he had prayed for and whom God put back in his life just last week and only the Lord knows what he's going to do. But I want you to know that since we've started this several months ago, time and time again I've had people come to me and say, "You wouldn't believe whose card I picked up tonight. You wouldn't believe what happened. I know this person!" And it's just been the miracle of God using ever-ready Christians and His ever-working power in and through our lives to accomplish His divine purposes for the glory of Jesus Christ. This is the will of God, is that He would use us and He would bless us and He would let us be a blessing to others. And so that's why we come together and that's why we pray together and that's why we share together because we wanna be ready for action and for the answer and with the attitude that says I can be a part of the will of God and I'm gonna let the will of God be fulfilled in my life day by day. It's the will of God that we pray for one another and that's what we're gonna do for the next few minutes tonight. We're gonna take time to pray for one another because we believe that God answers prayer and obviously there're are a number of prayer need here and we just treasure the time and the opportunity that we have when we're here on Wednesdays to take time to pray.