

MADRID CHURCH OF CHRIST

SUNDAY, MAY 07, 2017

2017 ANNUAL THEME:

PUTTING ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

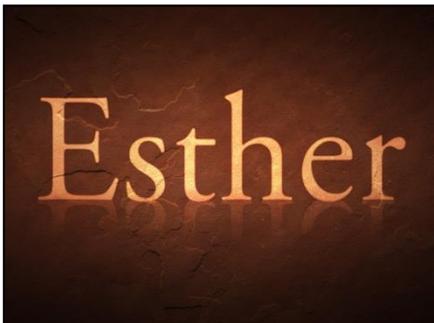


EPHESIANS 6:10-20

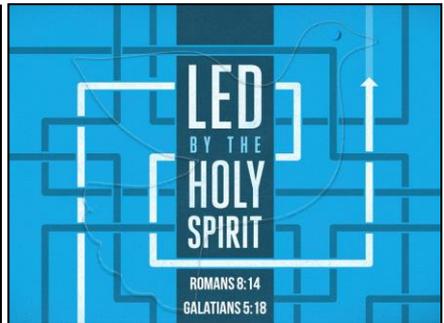
"PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL" (EPHESIANS 6:11).

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

9AM



11AM



"BE DILIGENT TO PRESENT YOURSELF APPROVED TO GOD AS A WORKMAN WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED, ACCURATELY HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH" (2 TIM. 2:4).

RIPPED OUT OF CONTEXT:

1 PETER 3:15

It is very important to make sure we believe and practice the truth. We want to make sure the things we believe and practice are pleasing to God, but I am afraid that in the process of defending what we believe, we become guilty of misrepresenting a passage of scripture. Here is the scripture: "...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3:15, ESV).

There are two ways, in my judgment, that this passage is often misused.

1. This passage is often used by Christians to show that God commands us to always be ready to defend everything that we believe and practice as a church and as individuals.
2. This passage is also used to show that God commands us to be ready to defend the faith when skeptics attack it and/or question it.

Is Peter really commanding these two things of Christians in the passage? The answer is 'no.' I will give a couple reasons for this answer.

First, if Peter is commanding his readers to be prepared to defend the faith against skeptics or to be ready to answer any question that may be posed about what we practice, he is setting up his readers for failure. It is nearly impossible to have an answer for every possible argument or question that may be asked. Peter IS giving a command to those he is writing to in this verse, so to be unprepared to give an answer would be a violation of the command (a sin). How could we possibly be ready to answer every question that skeptics may ask? How can new converts be ready to obey this command when they are so new in their understanding? Can this really be what Peter is commanding here? It is no surprise that when a verse like this is used to say, "we must be ready to defend everything that we believe and practice," that many become intimidated and think they cannot evangelize because they don't have the knowledge to answer every question that may be asked. If this is what Peter is commanding, I would be afraid to evangelize because I would not be able to obey this verse if a question was asked that I did not have an answer to.

Second, the passage does **not** say to be ready to ‘defend the faith’ or to “defend what we traditionally believe or practice as a church.” These ideas (with good intentions) are usually read into the passage. As often as the phrase “defend the faith” is used when this passage is quoted, you would expect it to be in the passage, right? But it is not there.

Let’s look at 1 Peter 3:15 within its context to find out exactly what Peter is commanding his readers to be ready for.

Peter was writing this epistle to Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman empire at the time (1Pet 1:1). Within the epistle, Peter speaks of persecution that was coming upon God’s people (see 3:13-4:19). He is writing to prepare them for this persecution and to encourage them to live obediently to Christ in the church, in their family relationships, and before their governing authorities (who were the ones leading the persecution).

1 Peter 3:15 is written in the main section of the letter where Peter is preparing his brethren for the persecution that is coming. He tells them in 1 Peter 3:14 that they are blessed if they suffer for righteousness sake. He also tells them not to be afraid of those who threaten them. Instead of being filled with fear, he gives the command of verse 15: “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...” Instead of being afraid, he tells them to remember who their Lord and God is and to be ready to give an answer/a defense to those who are persecuting them and questioning them. And what were they to be prepared to tell their persecutors? Peter says in verse 15 that they are to be prepared to give them “a reason for the hope” that is in them. The persecutors would see how the Christians were responding to their trials with love, gentleness, and submission, and they would ask questions about why they are responding the way they were. Peter is telling them to be ready to tell them the reason why they have hope, and the answer they would have given is NOT ‘why they believe the church worships a certain way’ or any of the common philosophical arguments given for the existence of God. Peter already told them in this epistle the reason why they have hope: “...He has caused us to be born again to a living hope *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...*” (1 Peter 1:3).

Peter was not giving a command to be ready to defend what they believe about the work and worship of the church, and he wasn’t telling them to be ready to give philosophical arguments about the existence of God. He was telling them to be ready to tell those who question them about Jesus

and the resurrection. They needed to be ready to give their persecutors the Gospel! This is the reason for the hope that we have within us. This is “the defense” that Peter is telling them to give, and this is the defense that Peter and the Apostles gave when they were challenged/questioned in the book of Acts. They told people about the resurrected Messiah who was put to death for the sins of the world, and they proved that this hope was a reality through their eyewitness testimony and the prophecies Jesus fulfilled.

If we desire to be pleasing to God, we should be able to show that what we believe and practice is from Jesus and His Apostles, and we should defend the teachings of Jesus and His Apostles. We must “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) so that God’s people can be protected from the false teachings that come from the world and so the lost can see the truth. But with this said, we do need to be careful not to be guilty of misusing a scripture such as 1 Peter 3:15 in the process. It is not a proof text for apologetics as it is practiced today. It is not a passage commanding us to be ready to give an answer to every question that is asked by skeptics or people in other religious groups. It is Peter’s command to his readers to be ready to honor Christ in telling their opponents about the One who has given them such a great hope. This is something that Peter’s readers could do, and it is something that everyone who has obeyed the Gospel can do.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 06/04 - Song Service @ 9AM
- 07/30 – Next Invite Sunday - *The Best Possible News: Jesus is Risen*

DAILY READING:

- **05/08** – Hosea 11-14; Psalm 124
- **05/09** – Joel 1-3; Psalm 125
- **05/10** – Amos 1-5; Psalm 126
- **05/11** – Amos 6-9; Psalm 127
- **05/12** – Obadiah; Psalm 128
- **05/13** – Jonah 1-4; Psalm 129
- **05/14** – Micah 1-4; Psalm 130



*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
-Psalm 119:105*