

## Prepared to Profess the Truth

1 Peter 3:15

Prepared to Profess #1

**A**LWAYS being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. You're on Facebook or Twitter and a friend posts the latest from the chief New Atheist of our time, Dr. Richard Dawkins. *Are you prepared to profess the truth?* You're at work and asked what you think of the latest proposed legislation related to LGBTQ+ and freedom of speech. *Are you prepared to profess the truth?* Maybe you're on a play date with your kids' friends and want to engage a non-churched mom whose life seems so full already. *Are you prepared to profess the truth?* The opportunities for you and I to speak the life-giving words of God himself are limitless. *But are you prepared?*

The Lord is at work among us! Amen? One way he's pouring out his Spirit on us is to stir us up to outreach and evangelism in preaching and worship, in our various teams going out, and in our daily lives. I want to keep in step with the Spirit so we're going to spend a season of evening services together focused on equipping us so that we can be PREPARED TO PROFESS THE TRUTH.

WHO IS TO PROFESS THE TRUTH?

...but in *your* (ὁμῶν) hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks *you* (ὁμᾶς) for a reason for the

hope that is in **you** (ὁμῖν)... Did you hear those pronouns? **Your** and **you**. We live in an age of specialization, don't we? Lawyers call in expert witnesses to testify about the special science of beetle life cycles to determine time of death. In baseball there are middle relievers whose only task is to come into the middle of a game and pitch to one batter. In the church this has also seeped in. When I was in charismatic and Pentecostal churches we talked about "every member is a minister"—which I don't believe is biblical—but then I came into the Reformed church and there were ministers of the Word, who were the experts; elders, who alone did visits to homes and hospitals; deacons, who alone took care of the needy. But Peter says there's a general calling for all of us as believers to be salt and light, witnesses to the truth, and defenders of the faith. You need to be willing and able to express the Christian Faith in your own way, in your own time, to your own neighbors. *Are you prepared to profess the truth?*

WHEN ARE WE TO PROFESS THE TRUTH?

**Always** (ἀεὶ) **being prepared**. Haven't you noticed with the advent of personal computers, then the internet, and then smart phones that the promise of making life simpler has actually made it busier and more complicated. It used to be that you went to work, went home, recharged, and then returned to work the next day. Now we're always on the clock.

Spiritually we are, too. The **always** of Peter's exhortation is in the context of suffering. There's a general suffering of this age (Rom. 8) in which we all get sick, feel down, and eventually die. But Peter's speaking of a specific kind of suffering as a Christian. In 2:18 he addressed Christian slaves who "endure[d] sorrows while suffering unjustly" then applied it to all believers: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." Then just after our text he says, "For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil" (3:17). He's not saying that it may or may not be the will of God if you suffer for righteousness' sake; he's saying that when you suffer in this way it *is* the will of God.

If we're to be ready **always** to profess the truth in times of suffering and hardship, how much more so in times of blessing and opportunity when we have no hindrances? If so, the popular saying is apropos: "If you fail to plan you...plan to fail." *Are you prepared to profess the truth?*

#### HOW ARE WE TO PROFESS THE TRUTH?

How do we plan?

First, with spiritual preparation. In verse 14 he says don't fear the threats of men; instead, in verse 15 he says we fear Christ: **but** (δέ)—there's a contrast in

Greek—in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy or better *sanctify* Christ the Lord (KJV, NASB). In other words, why be afraid? Jesus is Lord! Amen?

Second, with doctrinal preparation. **Always being prepared to make a defense.** That's the word ἀπολογία or a legal defense. This word is used several other times in the New Testament when Paul defended his ministry before crowds in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1) and before the Roman magistrates (Acts 25:16; 2 Tim. 4:16; cf. Phil. 1:7). Paul even said of his imprisonment: “I am put here for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:16). So when you're asked what you believe in your heart, you need to open your mouth and let it out! Possession of the truth of God leads to its profession. You can't hide the truth under a lampstand. What's inside of you must come out! The famous Vegas magician, Penn Jillette, said once:

I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward...How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?

Third, with ethical demonstration: **with gentleness and...respect.** In 1 Peter the word translated as **gentleness** (πραΰτης) is used only for a wife's gentleness (3:4), so I take Peter to say here that we are to be gentle towards **anyone who asks.** Turn over to Colossians 3 for a moment. Paul exhorts us to allow “the word of

Christ [to] dwell in [us] richly” so that we’re enabled to “teach[...] and admonish[...] one another in all wisdom” (v. 16). Then he goes on to spell this out in terms of wives’ relationships to their husbands, husbands to wives, children to parents, fathers to children, servants to masters, masters to servants, and then we as Christians to the world: “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:5-6).

In 1 Peter the word translated as **respect** (φόβος) is also translated as “fear” (KJV) or “reverence” (NASB). It’s mainly used in reference to God (1:17; 2:17; 3:2\*; 3:14) but also our fellow human beings (2:18; 3:2\*; 3:6). 2:17 gives us the clue that while we are to honor (τιμήσατε) the king only God get’s our fear (φοβεῖσθε). *Are you prepared to profess the truth?*

TO WHOM ARE WE TO PROFESS THE TRUTH?

To *anyone* who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Context is the unbeliever seeing a Christian endure suffering. *Are you prepared to profess the truth?*