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# Lakeland Hills Leader

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## Our Defense Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ – Part One

*By Chuck Richardson*

"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;" [1Peter 3:15NAS95]

Are you ready to defend your conviction in the gospel of Jesus Christ? This question is worthy of our consideration, and I hope we will examine our hearts to see if we're ready. I will breakdown each phrase of Peter's text so that we may examine ourselves, find anything lacking, and correct to prepare us as defenders of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must recognize that if we are disciples of Christ, our faith will be challenged, and in that moment if we effectively defend the gospel as Christ demands, then we will fulfill our mission as disciples. Each of us can achieve this mission if we cultivate the necessary requirements, so are you ready to discover the way this text teaches us our mission?

### **"But Sanctify Christ as Lord in your Hearts"**

The adversative **but** indicates that we do this in spite of the things previously said. And Peter says pain inflicted to cause suffering and intimidation are the devices evil ones will use to destroy our faith and I am certain evil will be successful if we don't sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts.

Our first charge is to be prepared to endure suffering and intimidation, and we can only accomplish this by sanctification. How do we do this? To sanctify is to set apart, and thus we are to set our hearts apart to Christ exclusively. We have to be committed to Him and no others, just as the bride to the husband [Eph. 5:22-24]. And in a sense, Christ is the one sanctifying us to Himself [Eph. 5:26-27] in this case as well. Note, Christ does this through the word.

The word provides the motivation to be **sanctified in heart**, this is no causal relationship, there is no trial run to see if this is what we want, it is a heart sanctification, we are all in. The word tells us who Christ is [Mar. 1:9-11], and what He came to do [Mat. 16:18,19; 10:34], and that Jesus would bring a sword and not peace. This is necessary to understand why we suffer. Likewise, Jesus came so we may live in His kingdom forevermore [Jon. 3:16; Luk. 1:33; Jon. 14:15,16], so my defense of the gospel is no trivial matter. I have an everlasting reason to sanctify Him in my heart. I achieve sanctification with a thorough investigation of Jesus and all that He desires so that I can do all He wants [Col. 3:17]. I then give myself sacrificially [Rom. 12:1; 6:15-23], because there is no other choice that will provide an everlasting bliss [Rom. 6:5-9].

It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." {Luk. 1:17} After all, it is our hearts the Lord wants!

Recognize friend, we don't do anything that we don't have heart in, though we may think otherwise. Even the mundane tasks of life are done because we are motivated through the heart to do so. So we set aside our hearts to someone and something, but to who? **Christ as Lord!** If no other can claim lordship, then why do we so willingly give our hearts away? This is the question we will answer in the next lesson on this text as we look at the readiness to give a defense.

## **Serving with Humbleness of Heart**

*From the Editor*

Time and again, Jesus had to remind his disciples that they were servants and were to serve each other with humbleness of heart. He reminded them in Matt.20:25-28 *"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

We like the disciples need to be reminded that we are imperfect servants serving a perfect master. We are to serve in humbleness of Spirit serving the Lord and serving each other as we work together towards the goal of eternity with God in Heaven.

Jesus said it well in Luke 17:20 *"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" Let us be busy serving God and one another as humble servants. LDW*