



Nov 28, 2021

Lakeland Hills Leader

Our Defense Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ [Part Three]

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]

We have learned that our heart must be examined to see where our desires lay. We can conclude our heart's desire exposes our hope or lack thereof, so let us look at our purpose for hope as we consider our defense of the gospel of Jesus Christ and our motivation to help others have the same hope.

"For the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;"

Now to the exposure of our heart. If we aren't prepared to give a defense, what does this say about our hope? Friend, we have no hope! Either we are looking for the easy path to salvation [Luke 9:57-62], or we believe that Jesus will or must receive us as we are without any conditions beyond what we're willing to adhere to [Luke 16:24; 18:23]. Jesus clearly says: *"Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it."* {Luke 17:33}

Hope is our reason for giving up ourselves to be identified with Christ [Rom. 12:1,2; 1Cor. 14:1]. I'm afraid we will discover we think very little of our hope or we have no hope at all because we deceive ourselves in thinking we will be received in God's presence on a "wing and a prayer". Thinking like this is nothing more than a poor game of chance, yet do we not speak like that when we pray? *"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* {Heb. 12:1-3}

Therefore, if we have hope, we are led to acknowledge two things: our hopelessness before we received hope through Christ Jesus [1Cor. 15], and the hopelessness of all mankind [2Cor. 2:14-16]. This should be our motivation to be gentle [Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1Cor. 10:12; Gal. 6:1]. And to reverence or fear {*phobos*}. Fear of who or what, you may wonder. I believe it is likely that the idea of terror and respect are inclusive in this text, so I offer you this assessment. We believe in the righteous wrath of God [Mat. 3:7; Luke 21:23; John 3:36], *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"* {Rom. 1:18}. So, we persuade men because of this fear [2Cor. 5:11] because the love of Christ controls us [2Cor. 5:14], so we don't see men as mere flesh, but as Christ sees them [2Cor. 5:16]. Thus, we desire others be reconciled to God through Christ as we have [2Cor. 5:18-21]. So, we give a defense with gentleness and reverence.

Our hope is too precious not to give a defense, though it be difficult [Jas. 1:2], but isn't it worth it? Please remember, you must be a defender and even contender [Jud. 3], for the faith if you want heaven as your home. Will you listen to Peter's admonition? Will we work together in the defense of the gospel? Remember that our souls depend on it!