

1 Peter: Faith and Suffering

In the book of Mark, Peter recounts his gospel story with a focus on Jesus as a suffering servant. A key verse which underpins that message is Mark 8:34,

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

So in some ways the book of 1 Peter seems to be a continuation of that message, as Peter carries through this suffering servant theme to provide instruction on the ways that Christ's followers will suffer and how they should respond. With this in mind let's look at a few passages of that instruction and meditate on what God is teaching us through his servant Peter

Read the highlighted segments of 1 Peter with the following questions in mind.

What does this teach me about suffering in general?

What does this teach me specifically about suffering for my faith?

1:3-9

3:8

1:13-15

3:13-17

1:22

4:7-14

2:1

4:19

2:9-12

5:2-5

2:13-15

5:8

2:18-25

Read again the biblical mandate in 1 Peter 3:13-17. Is there anything in this passage that strikes you? Let's answer our key question: What does this teach me specifically about suffering for my faith?

Perhaps this mandate can be isolated to even just v 15:

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

What do you think this particular verse (v 15) means?

What are the challenges you experience when you need to 'make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you?'

Do you think that some people are better at this than others? Why?

Any time we discuss matters of faith with another person, the Holy Spirit goes before us. This is a great comfort and one that should not be quickly dismissed. We will move on to discuss some strategies for 'making a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you' but we should not do that before we consider the role of the Holy Spirit in that process. What do you think that role is?

Now that we agree that the Holy Spirit must go before us, let's shift gears a bit to examine the role we do play in this 'defense.' I would suggest that we use the example in Acts 17 as a formula for the 1 Peter 3:15 mandate that we be ready

and able to 'make a defense to anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us.' Let's read that chapter in Acts and allow the Lord to lift up a pattern of behavior we can follow.

[read Acts 17]

What are some examples that you see Paul displaying which can be instructive on how to make a defense of our faith?

Here are some examples, more specifically, that we can see in Acts 17

1. **Be in relationship**

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on _____ he

reasoned with them from the Scriptures (v. 2)

So he reasoned _____ with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace _____ with those who happened to be there. (v.17)

2. **Be prepared**

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word

with all eagerness, _____ the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

(v. 11)

3. Be patient

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was _____ within

him as he saw that the city was full of idols. (v. 16)

4. Be persistent

And they _____ him and _____ him to the Areopagus, saying,

"May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some

strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." (v. 19-

20)

5. Be relevant

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that

in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and _____ the

objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. (vv. 22-23)

Confidence in our ability to make a defense of our faith can be developed if we follow Paul's example. Remember the Holy Spirit goes first, so the pressure is off. But also consider these scriptures as you prayerfully ask God to show you opportunities for sharing your faith.

Proverbs 14:12: There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

1 Cor 1:18-20: For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

1 Cor 2:1-5: And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.