

Making a Proper *Apology*

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 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, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

1 Peter 3:13-17

The phrase translated here “to make a defense” is the word *apologia* from which we get the English word apology. An apology, as used in this context, is a clear, reasoned defense that answers accusations made against us personally or someone else—it is not an admission of guilt or even a request to be forgiven. *Apologia* is not about feelings but giving reasons for what we believe. If Jesus is truly our answer, then we ought to have answers for a world that cannot figure out why we believe in an unseen God who seems to leave us facing trouble and persecution without any assistance or direct, divine guidance. What answers do we have for them? More importantly, what answers do we have for ourselves as we face ongoing persecution? For hardship has a way of rocking our faith to the core of our very being especially if we have not anchored our hope to an unshakable, firm mooring that remains fastened during any storm as we navigate the uncharted waters of our lives.

Quite frankly, what rocks the faith of many is the problem of suffering. It is easy to follow God when everything is nice with no problems and all is carefree. However when tough times torch our happiness, trying to follow God may seem an exercise in futility. Following God through our spiritual deserts will either bankrupt our souls or enrich our spiritual lives. So again, we must ask, “Upon what does our hope rest?” Peter points to Jesus. Just because we are good does not mean good will happen to us. If the best of all who lived was despised and rejected, then how do we think we must always have only good things to happen to us. Our zeal for doing what is good cannot be in direct proportion to receiving good. Such goodness is shallow and not worthy of being rewarded. Jesus blessed his persecutors. Should this not be our attitude as well?

Peter instructs us to take our eyes off our troubles and those who cause it, “Look to Jesus and honor him in your hearts as holy.” We revere Jesus by making him holy and sacred in our lives as he takes the center of our lives rather than our present situation. When we allow our situation to dictate our happiness, how can we say Jesus is Lord of our lives? My hope cannot be based on what I have or do not have but in Jesus is and what he can do. This world is not as it should be. Few would question this fact. Christ calls us to bring light where darkness abounds and to make evil even spiteful situations full of goodness and hope. We honor Christ by filling our lives with his goodness and living with a clear conscience even when others torment us.

I wish I could tell you life is a breeze, but it is not. Life is not good because good happens to us. No, life is good because we make good out of bad, then we pack our lives to the brim with the grace Christ has given us to bear up under whatever ill has befallen us. We are called to bless out of the blessings God has given us. No matter how bad life is; God is always good. He is good through and through, and he shares his goodness with us so we can pass it on to others who need him so desperately. Christ filled up what we lack so we can live forever with God. What a privilege it is that we have been given the honor to fill up what others lack so they can see Christ and turn to him. True happiness does come from what I have but in what I give, and the best gift that I can ever give is Christ (see Colossians 1:24-2:5).

Steve Davis