

READY ALWAYS

BY B. G. SCHOLS

But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord" (1 Pet. 3:15a). The apostle's thoughts often ran in O.T. language. This is based on Isaiah 8:13, but Peter substitutes the Savior for Jehovah. This is evidence of Peter's acceptance of Jesus as God. Peter had known Jesus in His human life. Jesus had even washed Peter's feet, but Peter uses His name in the same way as Jehovah of the O.T. The Jews revered the word and feared putting any creature into the place of God. This helps us to see how saturated Peter was with his belief in the deity of Jesus. That point was the center of all apostolic preaching. This is the first great truth to come from these words.

What does he mean by "Lord"? To sanctify as Lord is to set Him apart as Lord of our life. This means we will serve Him with reverence. The fear of the Lord destroys the fear of men. "In your hearts" tells us that it is to be an inward and spiritual hallowing of God in our inmost being. Outward worship is not enough. Outward forms have value only when they are the expression of an inward reverence. Thus it is in the heart that we sanctify Christ.

Each man's heart is a shrine in which his god is enthroned. What is in one's heart is the center of his life and self. We do not sanctify Christ as we ought unless we absolutely confide in His word. If Christ is in our heart, we dishonor Him if we allow lust, foulness, meanness, worldliness, and sin to be in the heart where He is to be. If we act toward God as holy, then we will obey His laws and yield to all His requirements for they will be just and good. Likewise, we will respect His name and keep it holy. We would never use it in a vain way. You have confessed Him as Lord prior to your obedience in baptism, now face up fully to the implications of that confession and live accordingly. One thing that delivers us from fear is to have Christ in our hearts (Psm. 56:3).

"Being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15b). We should be ready to

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give an answer on any suitable occasion. "Ready" means prepared. There are three points to consider: a good conscience, a good life, and a good answer. We should be able to give a reason for our hope when asked, first for the defense of the truth, and also for the good of the asker.

Hope is a factor on which Peter lays a great deal of stress. It lives in the hearts of Christians. Thus every Christian ought to be able to give an answer. In days of persecution and unbelief, a Christian seems to be a fanatic because of his hope. Thus some may ask. We should be ready to answer to the glory of God. We must not remain silent in hopes of avoiding more of the world's hatred.

We should be sure our hope is established on the word of God. If we have the good conduct that comes from a good conscience which puts to shame those who speak evil, it may lead them to ask, and we should answer. Our hope is based on clearly revealed truth and not just vague wishing. It is defensible. We should be able to give clear answers and not just emotional responses. We have His word. It is the hope of eternal life and glory following the return of Jesus Christ that we might ever be with the Lord. Opportunities may seldom come so let us be prepared by our study and meditation to give answer with modesty and respect. "Always" – ever at any time.

"Yet with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15c). Argument always involves the danger of weakening our spiritual life by pride and bitterness. We must sometimes "contend for the faith," but it must be with gentleness and awe. We do not want to injure our souls by arrogance or anger in controversy. We should desire the spiritual good of our opponents. We should have awe of God and a desire to say only what is acceptable to Him. No defense can be used that is not gentle, kind, and gracious. If the question comes in an unkind way, we must not respond in kind. If we have a clear and intelligent understanding of our faith, we should be able to respond properly. Regardless of

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how humble our rank in this world, we can be a valuable defender of the faith.

"Having a good conscience" (1 Pet. 3:16a). A good conscience is one reason for the hope that is in us. We might be able to make a very nice sounding speech on Bible teaching, but it will not be convincing unless backed with a good life and a good conscience. Words will not convince if they are out of harmony with the life. No one is ready to defend the faith if his conscience is not good. It is a good conscience that makes zeal for good works possible. A good conscience enables us to give a proper answer. It also enables us to endure the evil speaking against us by our enemies. A good conscience must be properly educated and not be violated. Some people wear "lucky charms." The Christian wears a good conscience as his protection.

"Wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ" (1 Pet. 3:16b). "Revile" is the same word translated "despitefully use" in Luke 6:28. The idea is to abuse and mistreat. "In Christ" describes the sphere in which the Christian lives. He is in us and we are in Him. If they speak against faithful Christians, their words must be false. In time this will be obvious and accusers will be put to shame.

HOW TO KILL IDEAS

It can't be done.
We tried that before.
It costs too much.
That's beyond our responsibility.
We don't have time.
Too radical a change.
Let nature take its course.
We're not ready for it.
Let's appoint a committee to look into it.
We'd be a laughing stock.
It isn't in the budget.
It'll make equipment obsolete.
We're too small for it.
That's not our problem.
Why change—it's working OK.
We've never done that before.
Anyone else try it?
Won't work in our business.
We're doing the best we can.
Doesn't apply to us.
We're doing OK without it.
If it was good we'd already be doing it!

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'Approved Unto God'

Jimmy Tuten

On a 1972 trip to Baalbek, described as the show place of Lebanon, I had our bus make an unscheduled stop at a quarry just outside the ruins. I wanted to see the world's largest cut stone. The huge block of stone had been carefully cut, hewed, and squared centuries ago. It is sixty-eight feet long, fourteen feet high and fourteen feet wide. Its size is overwhelming. Even though it was carefully cut, a crack was found in it and it was never used. In spite of all the labor and effort that went into this gigantic piece of rock, it rests where it has stood for centuries. It was never fitted into place in the temple for which it was intended. After being carefully cut, it became a castaway.

Thinking of this massive stone reminds me of a statement of the apostle Paul! "But, I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27, NASV). "Disqualified" is one of the same root words rendered "approved" in 2 Timothy 2:15. The difference being that 1 Corinthians 9:27 renders it in a negative form and in this form it means "disapproved." His fear is that as a workman his service might not receive approval. He fears rejection.

In Paul's exhortation, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (1 Tim. 2:15), he encourages us to avoid becoming castaways, and hence, of no use in the Lord's vineyard. May we strive to be faithful in our work and worship to God. God help us to be zealous in our service to Him. In so doing we will stand approved unto God. We will not be castaways.

If you are not a Christian, you need not worry about becoming a castaway because you are already one. Why not avoid this and become a Christian? You may do so by believing and being baptized. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38).