

Discipleship Displays God's Pardon

Peter tells us "always be prepared." (Verse 15b)

Always be prepared to talk about Jesus.

Be ready to tell people where your hope in life lies.

If we are going to REACH our world it will require words to be spoken.

Always be prepared to make a defense.

Can you imagine a defense lawyer standing before the judge and not speaking?

Would you want that kind of defense?

I know I wouldn't.

And we are called to stand before a judging world and reveal Jesus.

Yes we reveal Him with actions, attitudes, values.

But we eventually weave all of that together with verbal witness.

Many years ago I was returning home from a youth rally in Toronto.

I had a car full of teens riding with me.

It had been a day with powerful preaching.

Many teens had responded to the altar call at the end of the services.

The rally was a new experience for some of our youth.

They had been invited by a friend Carrie.

Carrie was a great inviter.

She brought more friends to youth outings than everyone else put together.

This friend that she invited had never been to church before.

She was completely unchurched until that day.

I did not know that until the ride home later that night.

Everything had been brand new for her.

She had not gone forward for prayer when the invitation had been given.

So I asked her what she knew about Jesus.

She knew absolutely nothing.

I asked her if she would like to know who Jesus is.

She said "yes."

I wish I could say that that night she invited Jesus into her heart.

I saw her perhaps only once or twice after that night.

But for the next 45 minutes I told her what I knew about Jesus.

I told her about His miracles.

The feeding of the 5,000; the walking on water.

I told her about Jesus' death on the cross.

And about His resurrection three days later.

I told her why Jesus died on the Cross.

Jesus the hope that was in me.

Any 7 or 8 year old Sunday school student could have said the same things.

It wasn't deep theology.

I was just talking about Jesus.

Peter says we need to be zealous about telling people about Jesus the Hope.

Be zealous to live the life of Jesus in this world.

Who is Peter writing to?

We find out earlier in chapter 3.

"Likewise you wives . . ." (vs. 1)

"Likewise you husbands . . ." (vs. 7)

"Finally, all of you . . ." (vs. 8)

Everyone is to be prepared to make a defense about our hope.

It isn't just the scholar, the highly educated, the learned.

It isn't only those who have spent a life time mastering Jesus.

It is those whose lives have been mastered by Jesus.
Notice what 1 Peter 2:25 says, **"For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."**

We are called to tell the world about Jesus.
But there is a problem.

The problem is it isn't happening.

Carrie, the young person who invited her friends, is abnormal in the Church.
Most people in the Church do not invite anyone to come with them.

Only 2% of church members invite an unchurched person to church.

Over 90% of church members never share their faith with others.

Terry Malphurs writes, "95% of all Christians in N.A. will not win even one person to Christ in their entire lifetime."

"Ninety seven percent of born-again believers are sitting on the sidelines.

Ten years ago, "more than eight out of ten of the unchurched said that they would come to church if they were invited."

Something is terribly wrong!

One person described the church today with this imagery.

A church is often an island exiled from true purpose. When this happens, the church retreats with its focus on programs, good psychology, and public image. This creates walls that isolate the church from the needy world. These walls soon turn into mirrors. Church members who desperately need to live lives of purpose have little to look at but each other. As an island, the church is always lost. Movement on an island is by necessity, always circular--around itself--and never in the mostly straight line of an ongoing vision from God."

What has happened after 10 plus years of this activity?

The church is definitely impacting the world.

But it is a negative impact.

Our society is filling up with a new class of Christian - "nones".

"Nones" are people who want nothing to do with a church running in circles.

Peter tells us how we become relevant rather than isolated to the world.

I KEEP CHRIST CONSECRATED

Peter makes this abundantly clear in 3:15.

"In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord."

Keep your heart sanctified for Jesus.

Your heart must be a place where Jesus is at home.

Your heart must be a holy place.

It must be a place that is cleansed from all unrighteousness.

Peter says in verse 18, **"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God."**

That is our hope.

That is what we proclaim.

Until Christ is consecrated in your heart you will not reach.

There will be no reach if the journey of holiness has not begun.

There is no hope in your life to share with the world.

You must be brought to God through Jesus' death and resurrection.

You must confess your unrighteousness, your sin.

You must turn from that life to the life of Jesus.

Have you received the gift of new life through Jesus?

That gift transforms your life.

You will be blessed.

You will no longer live in terror because you will do right.

You will not be troubled because you will be righteous.

KEEP CHRIST CONSECRATED.

Change your mind about Jesus.

His is the most wonderful gift you will ever receive.

II KEEP YOUR CONSCIENCE CLEAR (see verse 16 and 21)

That is part of what it means to repent.

You have changed your mind about the place Jesus has in your life.

You have turned around in your way of living and thinking.
 You have realized that you were wrong about what was important in life.
 Nothing else matters except knowing Jesus and being in God's presence.
 The things that were valuable are no longer significant.
 And you keep your mind changed and clear.
 You keep focused on what is good, the resurrected life of Jesus.
 That is the only way to maintain the hope within you.
 When your conscience is clear people can say whatever they want.
 When your conscience is clear you are liberated to shine.
 There is nothing to hinder the light of Jesus shining through.
 When people abuse or reject us our hope is not dampened.
 A clear conscience affects how we live.
 Our behaviour will consistently reflect the presence of Jesus.
 We will not be ashamed of Jesus.
 He will be dynamically living through us.
 Our fleshly concerns will be dead.
 Our spiritual concerns will be exploding with new life.
 We begin to experience what Peter wrote in verses 8, 9.
 A clouded conscience will keep us from reaching our world.
 When we are two-faced and hypocritical we will keep people from knowing Jesus.
 If we attend church but never invite Jesus to be Lord we cannot have a clear conscience.
 We will be afraid to reach our world because of what they may discover.
 We will not be relevant to touch their needs.
 We will offer nothing that they could not find in any club.
 God is calling us to live with a clear conscience so we live consistently.

III KEEP CENTRED ON GOD'S WILL

For the rest of your life you say, 'Not my will but Thy will be done.'
 As we have ceased from sin, now we live the rest of our lives passionate about God's will. (1 Peter 2:15, 3:17, 4:2, 19)
 All we want is for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 We do not live any more by the values of this world.
 Our old sinful passions are dead, dead in the flesh (vs. 18).
 Something else has captured our minds, bodies, souls, strength.
 Jesus has captured us and we are alive in the spirit (vs. 18).
 We live in the spirit of Christ to do only what is right, righteous.
 The old passion is replaced with pure passion.
 What will make the Body of Christ the light of the world and salt of the earth?
 It begins with an obedient response to the call God voiced through Peter.
KEEP CHRIST CONSECRATED in your heart.
KEEP A CLEAR CONSCIENCE through Jesus' abiding presence.
KEEP CENTRED ON GOD'S WILL doing what is right no matter the cost.
 When Jesus is alive and central in our lives people want to be near Jesus.
 The hope and peace that is within will be shared.
 May everything about our lives be a blessing to Jesus and others.
 The words of our mouth, the thoughts of my heart, the deeds of the day.
 All expressing to our world our hope in Jesus.
 Is that what you are glad to do?
 Will you follow Him and invite others to join you?

Closing Song May the Words of My Mouth