

A REASON TO HOPE

1 PETER 3:15 • TV147A

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1 Peter 3:15

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

I want you to open your Bible today to the **Book of 1 Peter**. I am going to be reading a verse of Scripture found in **1 Peter 3:15**.

Here is our subject today: **“A REASON TO HOPE.”**

Now you find the Scripture and prepare to read it along with me. Now here is the text this morning in **1 Peter 3:15** and the apostle writes: *“but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always, to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”*

Now recently, a world famous evangelist made this statement on television and in a vast city-wide crusade. He said: “Fifty percent of the members of present day churches could die, be buried, and it would take six months for the church to discover that they were gone.”

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Now, did you hear that? A noted, world famous evangelist said “that fifty percent of the church members of present day churches could die and be buried and it would take six months for the churches to discover that they were gone.”

Here is what he is saying; this is what he is admitting: “that 50 percent of professing Christians today do not worship God. Fifty percent of the confessing Christians and church members today do not have any interest in the Gospel; they do not fellowship with other believers.”

In other words, this is what he is saying: “over fifty percent of present day church members do not really know God and are not really saved.”

Now my friends, actually the percentage may be higher than that for we are living in a day when decision has been substituted for regeneration.

We no longer look for Holy Spirit conviction. We no longer look for the troubled soul. We no longer look for the Publican crying “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*”

We have substituted all of that (regeneration, Holy Spirit conviction, troubling of the heart, and grief over sin); we have substituted that with a decision. Church membership has replaced the new birth. A man doesn't have to born again now, he just has to be a church member and he is saved.

Acceptance of facts or mental agreement with Scriptural facts has taken the place of faith. Opinions of men have been substituted for the Word of God and the preaching of good works and human merit, has taken the place of the preaching of God's redeeming grace and the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord brought this charge against the religionists of his day. In **Luke 16:15** he said unto them: “*You are they which justify yourselves before men but God knows your hearts: that which is highly esteemed among men, (that which is highly valued among men, that which men put a great premium upon), is an abomination in the sight of God Almighty.*” In other words; the Lord God said to Samuel, “*I the Lord looketh not on the outward countenance but I look on the heart.*”

The Scripture warns us to examine ourselves in the light of Scripture. Every professing Christian, every professing believer, every professing church member is exhorted in the Word of God to examine himself.

In **2 Corinthians 13:5** the Scripture says: “*examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. Prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Christ dwelleth in you, that is, except you be a reprobate?*”

In **2 Peter 1:10** the Scripture says: “*brethren; give diligence, (sincere diligence, care and concern), to make your calling and election sure.*” If you do these things you will never fail.

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Our Lord said: *“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord (or makes a profession, or joins the church, or follows the rituals and ceremonies; baptism and ordinances and these things), shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

“Not everyone that saith Lord, Lord, (or makes a profession or a decision) shall enter the kingdom of God but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

Our Lord said, *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord; have we not preached in your name? Have we not cast out devils in your name? Have we not done many wonderful works in your name? Then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.”*

I want to alarm you; I want to alarm everyone who will listen to me. I’m tired of people presumptuously claiming to be Christians when they give no evidence of the new birth. I’m tired of people talking about they believe in the grace of God but show no operation of grace in their hearts. It’s sad and the Word of God warns us to *“examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.”*

Now listen to our text again: Peter says; *“sanctify the Lord God in your heart,”* in other words, give God all the glory; the glory belongs to Him. Ascribe to Him all the glory for all the grace and all the mercy that is yours because He is worthy, *“salvation is of the Lord.”*

If any man perishes it will be his own fault. If any man is saved it will be because God in his grace and mercy dealt with us through Christ Jesus and not on the basis of our sins and evil; it will be God’s fault.

If any man perishes, the responsibility will be laid at his door. *“You will not come to me that you might have life.”* If any man enjoys the glories and blessings and benefits of God’s kingdom, he will say throughout eternity: *“unto him who loved me and washed me from my sins in his own blood and hath made me a king and a priest unto my God.”*

“Sanctify the Lord God in your heart.” Praise God in your heart!

**“Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God all creatures here below.”**

Read on now: *“Sanctify the Lord God in your heart; give him glory.”* He says: *“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is within you,”* the reason of that hope of forgiveness.

You say that you are a child of God; tell me why you believe that. You say that you are pardoned, you are forgiven of all your sins and all your transgressions are put away; why do you believe that?

You say that you are saved and that you are a Christian and you are a child of God, on what basis, for what reason do you believe that? What is the reason of your hope or for your hope?

Then he says: “Give that answer with meekness and fear.” Give that answer in the spirit of humility; “by the grace of God I am what I am.” It’s all by his grace!

Now, I want to give you some of the reasons that men have given me when I ask them, “are you a believer, are you a Christian, are you saved?”

Here are some of the reasons that I have heard in 35 years of preaching the Gospel and they are not valid reasons at all. They are not reasons that can offer any assurance or confidence at all. I want you to listen to some of these reasons.

Our text says this: “You sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason (why you believe you are saved, why do you believe that you have a home in glory, why do you believe that God Almighty is your Father and you have been redeemed from your sin?)”

First of all: Here is what some people tell me when I ask, “are you saved? “Well, yes; I’m saved; I believe in God.”

My friends; let me tell you something, there are very few people who don’t believe in God. The Scripture says: “*the fool has said in his heart there is no God.*”

James declares this in **chapter 2:19**: “*the devil believes in God; (that’s right; the devil believes in God) and he trembles.*” That’s more than most people today do; they are not trembling; there is no fear of God before their eyes, there is no reverence, no worship, and no awe of Almighty God.

That’s not a very good reason is it? The devil could say the same thing; “if being a Christian just means he believes in God, then every demon in hell is a Christian because they believe in God.”

Secondly: Here’s another answer people give: I say, “Are you saved, are you a Christian?”

They say: “Well, of course, of course I’m saved. I was raised in a Christian home. I was raised by Christian parents. I’ve been confirmed; I’ve be catechized; I’ve learned the creed. I was brought up in the Sunday school.”

So was Saul of Tarsus; read **Philippians chapter 3**. This man who hated Christ and who hated the true Gospel of sovereign, redeeming grace, this man who thought to do all evil against the name of Jesus Christ and to put Christianity out of business was raised in a church home or a home strictly religious.

He said: “*My mother was a Hebrew; my father was a Hebrew.*” He said: “*I was raised at the feet of Gamael, (the best theological teacher of my day).*” He said: “*Concerning the law I was blameless.*” “I was above many my equals. I was even promoted to be a Pharisee.”

Somebody else said: “Well of course I am saved, of course I am a Christian. I made a profession of faith when I was 10, 12, 14, or 16 years of age. I’m a church member; I’ve been baptized.”

So was Simon Magus; he was baptized and then he tried to use his money to buy the Holy Ghost. Ananias and Sapphira who were carried out of the church feet first after God had smitten them dead; they were both church members and baptized.

Somebody else says: “Well of course I’m saved; I am a preacher. Could you possibly doubt the salvation of a preacher or a teacher or an officer in the church? I’m an officer of the church.”

So was Judas Iscariot; he held a higher office than any of you will ever hold. He was an apostle. There weren’t but 12 of them. He was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord said: “*Haven’t I chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?*”

Not only was he an apostle but he held an office in the apostleship; he was the church treasurer, “*holding the bag, (the Scripture says); he went out to buy the things needful for the disciples.*”

This is no reason for any hope at all because you are a church member, you’ve been baptized, you’ve joined the church, or you have held an office in the church, or you are a preacher. These people at the judgment in **Matthew 7** said: “*Lord; we have preached in your name.*” He called them: “*workers of iniquity.*”

Somebody else says: “Well of course I’m saved; I believe the Bible. I tithe; I live a moral life.” So did the Pharisees; they were orthodox in the Scriptures. They tithed everything they possessed, every penny.

They not only tithed but they fasted twice a week. Not only did they fast twice a week but they lived a moral life. One of them stood in the temple and said: “*God I thank you I’m not an adulterer; I’m not an extortioner; I’m not even as this Publican.*”

That won’t hold water, you see, that’s not a valid reason; there are too many who claim that before you who perished.

Someone else says: “Of course I’m saved; I’ve done many good works.” These people said the same thing: “*haven’t we done many good works in your name?*” Our Lord said unto them: “*I never knew you. (I never had any relationship with you; you were never my own).*”

In **Romans Chapter 2:28** the Scripture says: “*He’s not a Jew who is one outwardly.*” That same thing applies to Christians; he’s not a Christian who is one outwardly.

Circumcision is not in the flesh and in the letter, neither is baptism, the Lord’s Table, or any other ordinance, it is in the heart. Salvation is a heart work; the conviction of sin is a heart work.

Faith is a heart work. Repentance is a heart work. My friend; these are shabby, shabby, reasons for any kind of eternal hope and they will not suffice. I hope that I can destroy them in your thinking all together.

You say: “Well preacher; what kind of reason would you give? That Scripture applies to you as well as it does to us.” You are exactly right! I preach this morning as one who may never preach again. I preach as a dying man to dying men.

I don’t want to miss Christ. You can miss Christ in the pulpit as well as in the pew or the world. In fact, the best place in the world to miss salvation is wrapped up in a false refuge of lies called “church membership and called the clergy or the cloth of the ministry.”

The apostle Paul who was the greatest preacher other than our Master who ever lived said: “*O that I may win Christ and be found in him. O that I may know him and the power of his resurrected life.*” I don’t want to miss Christ.

If you were to come to me today and say, “all right; apply that Scripture to yourself; “sanctify the Lord God in your heart and give us an answer for we are asking you a reason for the hope that you have.” I’ll do it my friend by God’s grace with meekness, humility, and fear.

First of all: I will say this; this is my hope: Turn to **John 6:66**; I would like for you to read this **John 6:66**; it says: “*from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.*”

Then said the Lord to the twelve, (which is to His inner circle, the twelve apostles): “*will you also go away?*” Listen to the apostles: “*Lord; to whom shall we go, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God:*

“*We believe and are sure.*” This is my testimony; this is the reason for my hope. I believe and I’m sure that Jesus of Nazareth, that Jesus who was born in Bethlehem of the virgin Mary, who walked on this earth for 33 ½ years, who went about doing good, of whom the heavenly Father said, “*this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*”

Who was mocked and despised and rejected and finally nailed on a cross outside the city walls of Jerusalem between two thieves and was buried in a borrowed tomb and rose again and stood one day out yonder on the mountain top and ascended back to heaven; He is that Christ, that Christ, the Son of the living God.

The word Christ is the title; “*He is that Christ, (that Messiah).*” This is the message of the Scriptures. In **Genesis 3:15**, all the way through to **Malachi** it declares that Christ shall come, that Redeemer shall come, that Messiah shall come, that prophet, that priest, and that king shall come.

I believe that Jesus Christ is that Prophet of whom Moses wrote. He’s that Priest of whom the sons of Levi were types. He is that King of whom David is a picture.

This is the message of the ceremonies; “*Christ is the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*” Christ is the atonement. Every type and picture and shadow of the Old Testament sets forth Jesus Christ; He is our Passover.

That rock in the wilderness is Christ. That is what the Scripture says and Jesus is the Christ. This is the message of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Christ Jesus used the same words that the Father God used at the burning bush when Moses asked the question, “*whom shall I say has sent me?*” You tell him “*I AM, that I AM, I AM, has sent thee.*” Christ said: “*If you believe not that I am, you shall die in your sins.*”

When they came to seek Him in the Garden, the soldier said: “*we seek Jesus of Nazareth.*” He said: “*I am.*” I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is “*I am*” (the Creator, the Provider, the Protector, and Redeemer).

The message of the New Testament is “*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*” When Simeon held the child in his arms in the temple he lifted his eyes to heaven and said: “*I am ready to die; Lord, let me depart in peace; mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*”

Here is the Christ; that’s my hope. I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is Prophet, Priest, and King, very God of very God, in human flesh.

Secondly: What is my reason; do you want an answer? Here is the second answer in **2 Timothy 1:12**; Paul says: “*I’m not ashamed, I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*”

Saving faith, my friend, is a committal to Christ. Listen to this; somebody said: “if you define something you really destroy it.” Well, that may be so; if I am going to try to define faith, I have looked through the years at different definitions of faith.

Here is the best one that I have ever found: Faith is made up of three things and Paul gives all three of them in this verse: “*I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed.*”

First of all: Faith is based on knowledge!

A man cannot believe what he does not know. You cannot trust an unrevealed Christ; it’s impossible. “*How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*”

If you don’t hear the truth about Christ, you will never believe on the living Christ. Paul said: “*I know whom I have believed.*” I know who He is. I know who sent him; I know where He came from and I know who He is: “*thou art the Christ the son of the living God.*”

The demons knew who He was; they said: “*we know who you are, you are the holy one of God and you come to torment us before our time?*” That’s knowledge.

Second: Faith is made up not only of knowledge, but of confidence!

A man cannot believe what he cannot trust, no way. If you cannot trust and if you are full of doubt you cannot believe. *“Perfect love casteth out fear.”* A man who trusts something can believe it. “I believe your word because I trust you.”

Paul trusted Christ; he was confident. He was persuaded that He could keep, that He could save and that He could redeem; that is what Paul believed.

Abraham, his faith is described this way: *“he was persuaded that God could do all that he promised;”* and that’s faith.

Third: Faith is a committal!

A man does not believe unless he acts on his faith; that’s right! Job said: *“I know that my redeemer liveth; I know that.”* He trusted Him and He committed himself to Him. David said: *“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. I am confident of that.”*

My friend; that is my hope; I believe he is the Christ and I have committed my soul, life, and future, hope and family, and everything to him. He’s the king. Christ is my Lord; He’s the sovereign and I belong to him.

Thirdly: In **John chapter 8:47** it says: *“He that is of God heareth God’s Word”*

Now listen, Christ said this; this is not a phrase that I coined, *“he that is of God (is born of God) heareth God’s word. You therefore, heareth them not.”* He is speaking to the religious people of his day, because *“you are not of God. If you were of God you would hear God’s Word.”*

That’s right! He said: *“My word has no place in you.”* The true believer bows to the word of God, the infallible, inerrant, word inspired word of God. He bows to it; he doesn’t claim to understand all of it but he bows to it.

He doesn’t claim to have mastered it but he does believe it. We are born of the Word of God: *“of his own will begat he us through the word of truth.”*

Our faith comes by the word of God: *“faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”* Our growth is through the word of God: *“desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.”*

Our assurance is based upon the word of God: *“these things are written to you that believe that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

I will tell you what the child of God, the true believer says: *“speak Lord; thy servant heareth.”* A true believer believes the word of God. He loves the word of God and he submits to the word of God. He does not put a question mark on the word of God, not a true believer. *“He that is of God heareth God’s word.”*

Fourthly: In **1 John 5:10** it says: *“he that believeth on the Son of God has the witness in himself.”*

He has a witness in his heart, a living witness, a powerful witness, a convincing witness, an assuring witness. That witness is the word of God fulfilled in him.

He not only believes God’s word but he experiences the word of God. Someone said one time: “you really don’t believe anything until you experience it.”

Then, that witness is the Holy Ghost who lives within him, it dwells within him. Every believer has the Holy Spirit: *“if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. The Holy Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are sons of God.”*

Then, this witness is the grace of God that operates in him: *“by this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another. He that loveth not knoweth not God. How can you love God whom you have never seen, if you hate your brother whom you have seen?”*

John said: *“I know that I have passed from death unto life because I love the brethren.”* That’s how I know; this is the witness; it’s not to believe the grace of God in your head but it is the grace of God operative in your heart.

I will tell you another witness: it is the fellowship with God that we have in our heart. God’s no stranger to the believer. The hymn writer said:

**“He walks with me
And he talks with me
Along life’s narrow way,**

**The joys we share
As we tarry there
None other have ever known.”**

The songwriter said:

**“Hallelujah
I walk with the king
Praise his name.”**

And His word and His Spirit and His grace and His fellowship *“beareth witness in my heart; I belong to God.”* Something has taken place. The blind man said: “I was blind but now I see.” Something has taken place; something has happened that man couldn’t perform.

Fifthly: Another answer I will give you is found **Colossians 1:23**: He talks in the preceding verses about being reconciled to God by the body and blood of His Son, being reconciled by the precious sacrifice of God’s Son on Calvary.

A REASON TO HOPE

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Then Paul said, *“You hath he reconciled, if you continue in the faith, grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”*

I fear that many people have never known Christ and it is revealed that they have never known Christ. I don't care how fast they start, how aggressive and zealous they are at the beginning or how long they keep up the masquerade.

Nobody is crowned unless he finishes the race. Nobody is crowned unless he crosses the finish line. Nobody is crowned unless he endures to the end, *“the same shall be saved.”*

There are too many warnings in God's word about this. In **Hebrews 10:38** it says: *“the just shall live by faith but if any man draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”*

Hebrews 3:14 says: *“We are partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of confidence steadfast to the end.”* Preacher, do you believe what I am saying? See me in 30 years. If you are still walking with the King I'll say: “well, it looks like you have a good hope, *“if we continue in the faith!”*”