

**1 Peter 3:13-17**  
**(Isaiah 55:6-11)**  
**“Giving Reason for Your Hope”**

**Introduction**

Remember that Peter is writing to Christians facing unimaginable persecution under Nero’s reign of terror. Yet he asks them the rhetorical question, “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” As we have noticed before, Peter’s first listeners probably thought, “Who is there to harm us! Is he crazy? We are surrounded by enemies seeking to destroy us. How can he ask such a question?” But we have seen that Peter is describing a life so very good that nothing in the world can rob us of our peace and joy. If we have received the new life that Jesus came to bring, then we have “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for [us] ... ready to be revealed in the last time” (1:4-5). And therefore we “rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory” (1:8).

In the midst of this description of the good life, Peter speaks these familiar words that are the rallying cry of those particularly gifted at defending the Christian faith: “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (3:15). These words have encouraged generations of Christian students to study apologetics – the defense of the faith – and modern day apologists such as C.S. Lewis, Lesslie Newbigin, Alvin Plantinga and Tim Keller, have been as popular as rock stars to Christian students hungry for answers to the challenges regularly leveled at them in the course of their studies.

The challenge still stands for each of us today: we are called to acquaint ourselves, not only with the faith, but with the typical kinds of objections frequently raised by thoughtful people, so that we will be prepared to explain why we believe what we believe. Of course, the most powerful thing that we can do is simply to tell our own story, the story of God’s grace in our lives. If we do not have such a story, then no matter how brilliantly we may debate evidences for the existence of God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ or the veracity of the Scriptures, our best attempt will fail the test of authenticity. We are not called to be the Lord’s attorneys but his witnesses, and a witness is only called to tell what he or she has seen and heard.

Nonetheless, there is a challenge here that we must heed, and I would suggest that those who are most naturally attracted by the challenge and most naturally suited to defend the faith with classical arguments are perhaps in greatest jeopardy of failing the test in the heat of the moment because they have heard only the challenge to be prepared to make a defense, but have not heard the larger context that alone makes such a defense of the faith effective. So I want to encourage you today to consider four simple challenges found in these verses found in verses 15 & 16.

## **Body**

- 1. Grace-filled defense of the faith begins in the heart (3:15a).**
- 2. Grace-filled defense of the faith engages the mind (3:15b).**
- 3. Grace-filled defense of the faith is conducted with grace (3:15).**
- 4. Grace-filled defense of the faith is conducted with confidence (3:16).**

## **Conclusion**

In the midst of trouble, under threat of persecution, surrounded by enemies determined to destroy them, these first Christians were encouraged toward a position of quiet confidence, grace and dignity. They were not to demonize their enemies, but rather to love them, always remembering the One who, while we were his enemies, loved us and gave himself for us.

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