

April 28 08 1 Peter 3:15-17

## ARE YOU PREPARED?

When you travel on an airplane the first thing that happens is that the stewardess begins to explain the things you need to be aware of as you fly. Since we don't fly a lot, Carole and I listen and follow along reading the instructions as the stewardess goes over safety tips. But we notice others around us still putting stuff away, picking up a magazine, reading their books and doing other things not paying much attention to the stewardess' instruction that could save their lives in case of an emergency. Not many people pay attention to what she is saying, but she goes through the motion on each flight so that if something happens those who have listened will have heard enough that they could survive an accident. If I were to ask our latest Eagle Scout participant, Craig Ripka, about things he learned from scouting about being prepared he could spout them off quick as a wink. Or even his dad, Tom, could tell you all that he teaches other scouts to be prepared just in case something comes their way that needs taking care of. So all know the motto for the Boy Scouts is "Always be Prepared." They are trained to be ready to take care of things that might happen unexpectedly. Not long ago I read how a young man survived out in the cold and snow because he used things he learned in Boy Scouts. We might joke about that saying but how many of us carry umbrellas in our cars or brief cases just in case it rains. My mom used to make sure she had

extra money tucked away some place on her person in case something happened and she needed more cash. In fact when my mom died we had to go through all her dresses and skirts to see if there was any hidden cash. Sure enough, we found lots of money stuffed here and there. I know a young lady who carries extra cash some place in her car just in case she runs out of money or an emergency occurs. Many years ago people used to keep extra keys to their cars in a magnetic enclosure hidden in wheel wells just in case they lost their keys. There are those who hide a house key some place near by in case they lose the one they carry. My golf bag is heavy, not just because of the clubs I have, but because I carry lots of golf balls because I need to be prepared in case a few in the woods or the water.

The other night a commercial came on for a hospital in Decatur saying how their trauma unit is always prepared to meet any emergencies. So that motto **ALWAYS BE PREPARED** fits everyone at all times. This morning the question is, **ARE YOU PREPARED?**

In our Scripture this morning Peter wants us to be prepared spiritually. Remember how he said last week that we were “holy people, people belonging to God? We are God’s chosen people, not God’s frozen people?” Well he continues on this week to tell us that as God’s chosen people he wants us to be prepared to share our faith. He wants us to be prepared to tell others why we believe and why

we have hope. Listen to God's Word through Peter found in his first letter, chapter 3 verses 15-17. **READ**

Are you ready to give a **defense of why you believe in Jesus**? Every time there is a religious survey we find there are an overwhelming amount of people who say they believe in God and in Jesus. But when they ask those same people about going to church or following their beliefs many of them say they do not do those things. The Apostle Paul tells us he is not ashamed of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with anyone at anytime. It's amazing how God used him when he was in prison chained to his guards for 24 hours. I'm sure some of those guards were glad when their shifts were up, or Paul finally fell asleep. But I am also sure that over a period of time these guys began to ask the right questions about why Paul believed, and boy did they get an ear full. We know that Jesus had told the disciples that when they were questioned about their faith that the Holy Spirit would give them words to say. Peter found that to be true when he stood before the religious leaders. Stephen was stoned to death because he shared with the religious leaders the fact that Jesus was the Christ and they had him crucified because they failed to believe in him. Paul gave his defense of believing in Jesus before kings. Why, one of them who were interested told Paul he was almost persuaded, but he needed more time. But before Paul could speak to him again the king left town without pursuing his burning questions. The rich young ruler came to Jesus to find

what he had to do to inherit eternal life and Jesus didn't pull any punches. He told him he had to believe strongly enough that he had to sell all he had and come follow him. He wasn't prepared for that for he had too much wealth, so, as we know, and much to the disappointment of Jesus, the rich young ruler returned home spiritually lost.

Are you prepared to share your faith when questioned? Do you have a story to tell to the nation that will help them see you're Jesus? Is Jesus alive and well in your life? Can you sing with gusto, "Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control, that Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed his own blood for my soul. It is well...It is well...with my soul...with my soul. It is well; it is well with my soul."

I'm sure you know the story behind that hymn but if not let me briefly tell it to you. Mr. Spafford's family sailed to England many years ago and the ship sank. Later on Mr. Spafford received a telegram from his wife that she, and she alone from their family was saved. His daughters all drowned. He caught the next ship to England to join his grieving wife and it took the same route. He asked the Captain if they could go by the exact spot where the ship sank and his children, along with many others, were lost. It was on this spot that the words to the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul" came to him. This hymn was his testimony and he was able to give the world his response to the tragedy that happened in his life. He wanted the

world to know that though tragedy struck, his faith was secure and “it was well with his soul.” And folks, through the years it has touched many, many lives. In fact, as you know, it is one of my favorite hymns because though I’ve had 2 heart attacks. Though I’ve had many bladder surgeries since 2000 to remove those nasty tumors, and am now going through my second round of treatments to coat that bladder... and though I am looking at surgery next week to fix my hernia... “Though Satan should buffet, though trials shall come....it is well, it is well with my soul.” Amen brothers and sisters. Amen!

Peter writes to the Christians that our faith walk is not all hunky dory. There will be struggles. But in those struggles God is there. God did not promise me a rose garden when I decided to follow him. He didn’t say he would take me out of the storms of this life. He said he would be with me in those storms and I would not have to be afraid. In the 23 Psalm it doesn’t say that the Shepherd would make sure he took his flock around all the dangers, but that he would be with them in the valley of the shadow of death. You see, life isn’t going to be perfect, but the one in whom we believe is perfect and will see us through our circumstances. Suffering does happen to good Christian people. It is a part of life. But even in our suffering we can rejoice because we never suffer alone. Scripture says, God will never give you more than you can handle, for he will give you a way out.

Hear the words from a hymn written by Daniel Whittle in 1883. “I know not why God’s wondrous grace to me he hath made known, nor why, unworthy, Christ in love redeemed me for his own. But I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I’ve committed unto him against that day.”

Imagine that. Daniel Whittle didn’t understand it all, but he was grateful for the grace of God that filled his soul and forgave his sins and all that. He came to a belief in Jesus Christ so deep that he wrote this hymn to witness to his faith and why he believed so deeply in Jesus.

E. Stanly Jones, a great United Methodist preacher and missionary to India saw many souls come to Christ as he shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He got them to understand about Jesus and their affirmation came by using their 3 fingers as they would hold them up and yell out when asked about their faith, “Jesus is Lord!’

I know in whom I believe, do you?

And then Peter tells them that **they needed to share the hope** they had. They needed to tell others not about their past but the hope of what was to come. They were to share with others those past mistakes and sins were taken care of and that this new life they were living was full of hope. They were to share that this Jesus now living in their hearts had transformed them and they began to see the sun

shinning again. Those in despair saw a brighter future. Those who were ill knew one day a perfect healing was coming. Those who were friendless found friends in the community of believers. There was hope. There was a blessed hope that one day this Jesus they would see. Oh, I could get excited about some of this thinking, because I have seen and experienced that blessed hope. “Blessed assurance,” we sing, “Jesus is mine. Oh was a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation purchased of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.” Sing the chorus with me...”This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long; this is my story, and this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.” Friends, I get chills when I think of those words. ‘Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine.’”

When things go wrong in your life, can you still cry out “Jesus is Lord?” When suffering comes, can you live through it because God is with you? When death takes a loved one do you have the hope that one day you will see them again? A devoted pastor was facing serious surgery and a friend came to see and pray with him. “An interesting thing happened today,” the pastor said. “One of the nurses looked at my chart and said, “Well, I guess you’re preparing for the worst!” I smiled at her and said, “No, I’m preparing for the best. I’m a Christian and God has promised to work all things together for good.” Boy, did she drop that chart and leave this room in a hurry.”

When I was preparing to enter the ministry the first step was to sell our house. For 6 months it did not sell and we missed the fall semester at Asbury College. One day one of the guys I was working with asked if I was disappointed with God. I said no. I believed there was a reason my house did not sell and I was still here. Then I said, "Maybe my house hasn't sold because you haven't received Jesus." He, like that nurse, ran away from me as fast as he could.

Hope! Where would we be without it? The Apostle Paul tells us we don't face the loss of a loved one without hope because one day Jesus is coming back to take those who belong to him to their eternal home. We need not fear for we have that blessed hope of living forever and ever with our Savior and Lord free from all the things that bound us on this earth.

Peter tells us to check out our heart and make sure Christ lives there. With Christ as Lord of our lives our hope is strong because he promises to always be with us. Oh, we might struggle. Sometimes our faith might waver. Yes, we still question. Yes, we still are concerned, or even get scared. At least I know I am. But we still walk by faith because Christ leads the way. Because I know in whom I believe and I am persuaded that he will be with me always.

Remember, bad things do happen to good people. Satan would like to destroy your faith in God when things happen in your lives that you don't like. But folks,

when we believe in Jesus, we have a blessed hope that one day it's going to get better.

You know when Jesus became Lord in my life what a joy that was. I had lots of questions about the Bible and thankfully through our Bible study I began to find the answers. My life was changing. The people at work saw it before I did. That first day back to work after my first Bible study people asked me what happened while I was on vacation because I seemed so different. I told them I had seen the light. Though I was just kidding, it was true. And day after day and week after week until I left that place people kept seeing changes in my life. You see, the joy of the Lord became my strength. Even when Carole had back problems and eventually had to have back surgery the joy of the Lord never left. Though they could not understand it, they could see it. They were amazed at the change and the hope I had that was reshaping my life and my future. God used my new life to bring Good News to them as seeds of faith were planted in the hearts of those I worked with those years after my conversion experience before I left to pursue God's calling in my life.

Are you prepared? I mean are you prepared to tell others why you believe, why you go to church, why you read and follow God's word in the Bible? Are you prepared to tell others when things look bad in your life that you have hope

because you believe in Jesus, and you are persuaded that no matter what, you trust in the one who is preparing you to spend eternity with him?

Peter says, “Always be prepared to testify to your faith.”

So folks, when tough times hit. Let your faith shine. For Jesus is Lord of all.

Let the redeemed of the Lord Say “amen.”