

Sharing What Is Precious

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INI - SDG

1 Peter 3:13-22 ¹³ And who *is* he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, *you are* blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹ There is also an antitype which now saves us-- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

In our reading from Acts we heard Paul's famous sermon at the Areopagus which is sometimes also called Mars Hill. This is a famous sermon. There was even a church named after this incident. This church and many others

Paul's sermon here is certainly powerful, but there is really no secret as to why it is so. Peter tells us why in our sermon text, "Be always ready to share the hope that is within you."

It's true that Paul cleverly used this altar to an unknown God to introduce his sermon, but that isn't what made it powerful.

When you stop to look at the sermon other than the introduction it's really no different than any of Paul's other sermons or those of Peter that are recorded for us in the book of Acts. It is a straightforward presentation of the Gospel. God made the world and then sent His Son to die for sinful men. Jesus proved this when he rose from the dead.

From a human standpoint what made this sermon so powerful was that Paul simply shared with these people the hope which burned in his heart.

"I was a sinner and Jesus redeemed me from my sin."

We saw this same thing in John chapter nine, the man who was born blind. When confronted by the pharisees, the man simply confessed what Jesus had done for him. I was blind and now I see.

Jesus was precious to him because of what Jesus had done for him. The blind man spoke out of the gratitude of his heart.

Paul was one who well knew his sin, and knowing his sin was very grateful for what Jesus had done for him. Jesus was precious to him, and he spoke out of the gratitude of his heart.

Peter began this same epistle:

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The kids and I discussed earlier this week how God's word is not something new to us. It lacks that excitement which comes from new things, things like opening presents, a brand-new car, your first month of marriage.

New things can be exciting, but old things can be something better. They can be precious.

Who Jesus is and what He did may have lost some of the sheen of new and exciting, but it is still very precious to us.

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a treasure buried in a field. Not something new and exciting, but something old and precious. He compared it to a penny which a woman found and rejoiced to find. She rejoiced not because it was something new but because it was something precious.

Every year we celebrate Christmas and Easter, we hear the kids sing the same Christmas songs. We hear the same passages, the same message. These things are not new, but they are precious, because they tell how Jesus came to be with us.

“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,” what does this mean?

It means to ponder in your hearts what wonderful things God has done for you so that you learn to hold Jesus as something precious in your hearts.

When we were in India, we visited a carpet dealer. This man explained how the most expensive rugs should not be hung on a wall. They should be on the floor where people walk over them. Using them and walking on them keeps the color bright. To sanctify the Lord the Lord is to ponder His wonderful works in our hearts till they shine in our life.

Peter says that we should share the joy Jesus Christ, but he also discusses what our attitude should be as we share that message: meekness.

Paul's meekness like his joy was genuine. He truly thought himself the worst of sinners. His goal was never to prove, "I'm right and your wrong." His goal was to share Jesus who had rescued him from a life of sin. He offered to other the same thing that he himself received.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures

Ephesians 4:15 speaking the truth in love

When Paul talks about "speaking the truth in love." He did not mean that you need to go around telling people why they are wrong. Speaking the truth isn't about politics or cooking or my opinions. What he meant was speaking The Truth, the truth about how Jesus died for our sins and rose again. Paul wants us to encourage one another with reminders of the great things Jesus has done for us. How even though we are sinners He willingly died for our sins.

He wants us to talk about Jesus not to prove I'm right, but in order to share the wonderful things he has done.

Some of us have a problem with talking. We think the purpose of talking is to prove that I'm right or to get my way, or to make sure someone else knows they are wrong. We think that because we are so sure we are right that we have the right to yell and be angry.

Paul reminds us that the purpose of talking is not to prove I'm right or get my way but to share the wonderful things God has done for me a sinner.

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

An article we were studying in bible class suggested that the magic ratio is at least 5:1. Five encouraging, or complimentary or loving things for each negative criticism, even if you think you are saying the criticism in a loving way. And that doesn't mean you say five nice things just so you can say the negative thing you want to say.

So what do we learn from this? We learn that we are just like Saul. Remember how Saul was so sure that he was right that it was ok for him to persecute and murder the Christians. We probably haven't murdered anyone, but we have had that same attitude that we are so sure I'm correct that it's my right to speak in anger.

However, if we are just like Saul we are also just like Paul, redeemed by Christ and saved from our own anger and sin.

Let's try hard to remember who we are: terrible sinners. Let's also remember who Christ is, the one who died for me and my neighbor. Hold Christ's forgiveness as something precious to our chests and share that precious forgiveness with one another.

The other day Laura and Millie Baggett found a little rabbit. They were bringing it around showing it to everyone. They were just so excited about this cute little bunny they wanted to share it. That should be our attitude about Jesus. He ought to be so precious to us that we want to share all that He has done for us in meekness and in love.

Amen