

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Defending Hope" 3/29/23

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason of the hope, which is in you, with meekness and fear. (1 Pet 3:15)

We often wonder how we are to live as Christ followers. Do our lives reflect His teachings? Do we reflect the love of God to those around us? Does our faith show in how we act and react? How is my life, how are my actions proof of my trust, my faith, my hope in the Living God?

In I Peter we are told we are to have unity of spirit, sympathy and love for others, to be tender hearted and have a humble mind. We are not to return evil for evil, we are not to condemn or berate, but bless others. We are not to speak evil but do right, to pursue peace. This is how God wants us to live, this is how we reflect His love. By setting these standards for our lives, we witness to our faith.

It is by how we live, realizing even when we suffer, we are blessed. With gentleness and reverence, our lives, our actions defend our hope. Our hope, our life itself, our good behavior is our defense against those who revile us. Our hope protects our faith. When called to account for our hope, we can defend it by the way we live, by the way we walk, face our trials, speak our faith. By walking in faith, holding on to our hope, we witness to God's love.

It is difficult at times to hold on to hope, let alone defend it. But by practicing our faith, by remembering how Jesus lived - and taught us to live, and by acting and reacting accordingly, we strengthen our faith and eventually we act from muscle memory. How does the musicians' fingers always know how to find the right note, to hit the proper beat, to follow the flow – practice.

I think this is what we are being told here. Practice unity, loving others, being tender and humble. Remember we have been called and blessings have been promised to us. Don't speak evil, choose to turn from doing wrong when tempted. Seek peace. Keep our minds, our hearts on God, remembering His ears are open to our prayers. Revere the Lord in all things. By practicing this life – even when we flub up, and we do, we defend the hope within us.

Others see this. It becomes natural, eventually, but it takes practice. We are strengthened by practicing. One can become so strong nothing can harm them, turn them from the direction which God has called them. We will not live in fear, we will not be overcome by troubles. We will eventually be ready for the concert, for life and our good behavior will not, cannot, be put to shame.

A follower of Christ is seen as honorable, their life reflects God's love. Their life, even when put to death, is alive in the Spirit.

Defending our hope, even when we suffer, reflects our love for God. God who so loved us He sent His only Son, who was put to death for showing this love to a world which reviled Him. This encourages us to face the day, to enter the fray, to continue the course – even when the going gets tough.

Our laments are surrounded by God's promise of hope as we journey through this wilderness which leads us to Easter morning. As we wander the unknown, let us abound in hope, for God's love and forgiveness washes over our guilt and our shame and sets us free. By Christ's death and resurrection, we are declared Not Guilty. To those who wish to judge us, our defense is our hope.

Please pray with me:

Creator God, thank you for gifting me with faith and hope. Help me to love You and to serve others, to live in such a way that my life defends the hope within me.

Amen.