

Always Ready

1 Peter 3

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The following is an excerpt from
The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on 1 Peter 3.

always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; (3:15b)

It is not just endurance through the blessing of suffering that believers are to submit to; there is also the opportunity to defend the truth when they are being persecuted. Christians must be ready to **make a defense** of the faith. The Greek term for **defense** (*apologia*) is the word from which the English terms *apology* and *apologetics* derive. It often means a formal defense in a judicial courtroom (cf. Acts 25:16; 2 Tim. 4:16), but Paul also used the word informally to denote his ability to answer those who questioned him (Phil. 1:16). Always indicates believers' need for constant preparedness and readiness to respond, whether in a formal courtroom or informally, **to everyone who asks** them **to give an account** for why they live and believe the way they do. **Account** is simply *logos*, "word," or "message," and it calls saints to be able at the time someone asks (present tense) **to give** the right words in response to questions about the gospel.

The gospel is identified as **the hope that is in** believers. **Hope** is synonymous with the Christian faith because the motive for believers' embracing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is their anticipation of escaping hell and entering eternal glory (cf. Acts 26:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Col. 1:23; Heb. 10:23). Thus **hope** becomes the focal point of any rational explanation believers should be able to provide regarding their salvation. (For further insights into the meaning of hope, see the discussion of 1:3 in chapter 2 of this volume.)

The believer's defense of this hope before the unbeliever who asks must be firm and uncompromising, but at the same time conveyed **with gentleness and reverence**. **Gentleness** refers to meekness or humility, not in the sense of weakness but in the sense of not being dominant or overbearing (cf. Eph. 4:15, "speaking the truth in love"). The Lord Himself was characterized by this virtue, as was Paul: "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:1a).

Reverence expresses devotion to God, a deep regard for His truth, and even respect for the person listening (Col. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:24–26).

Christians who cannot present a biblically clear explanation of their faith (cf. 1 Thess. 5:19–22; 1 John 2:14) will be insecure when strongly challenged by unbelievers (cf. Eph. 4:14–15). In some cases that insecurity can undermine their assurance of salvation. The world’s attacks can overwhelm those who have not “put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8; cf. Eph. 6:10–17).

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