

Cornerstone
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A Non-Apology 'Apology'
1 Peter 3:13-16

When a public official or corporate leader is revealed to have done something wrong, one of the first things they do is enlist lawyers and publicists who craft statements designed to appear to show contrition while not admitting wrong doing. That is very different from the kind of apologies many of us grew up with. Most of us were told an apology meant admitting you were wrong and making restitution.

Forced apologies are said to have little value because they may not come from the heart. I will never forget a forced apology I had to make. As a fifth grader I smarted off one day to my school teacher, Mr. Hoffman. I don't remember what I said or how Dad found out. He had surveillance cameras long before they were invented. It seemed like I couldn't get away with anything.

Anyway I got home and Dad said, "We're going to Mr. Hoffman's house and you're going to apologize." For some reason I remember the time. Five pm the two of us walked the short distance up the hill to the teacher's house. We didn't have telephones or anything so when he opened the door Mr. Hoffman was surprised to see us. He smiled and said, "Come on in." We didn't go in.

Standing on the steps and barely able to see -- to say nothing about get words out -- I apologized to my teacher. Trust me that forced apology was not worthless. I *never* wanted to do that again.

Many apologies today bear only a passing resemblance to kind I gave Mr. Hoffman. Sometime the conjunction, "but" totally defeats the apology. "I'm so sorry..." or "I apologize...but it was really your fault or I shouldn't be held responsible.

Or you can put an "if" in the apology. The statement, "I'm sorry if anyone was offended" is not an apology. The little word "if" disputes whether an offense actually happened and the passive verb "*was offended*" hints that it could have been anybody's fault, or, nobody's. We hear so many insincere apologies these days you might wonder when the word stopped meaning "I'm sorry."

The answer is before it ever began.

The earliest meaning of 'apology' was not a confession of wrongdoing but "something said or written in defense." The word has its origins in Greek, where the prefix was apo- ("away from") and the root was logia (meaning "speech"). An apology was "something said or written to defend or to justify something."

If you ever studied the ancient Greek philosophers you may remember Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, from 399 BC. Plato's piece recounts the arguments Socrates put forward at his trial, after Socrates was accused of 1) failing to acknowledge the gods that the city leaders acknowledged, and, 2) introducing new 'unapproved' deities."

Socrates' apology was not an admission of wrongdoing at all. In fact his logic was so good that his apology nearly got him acquitted. Barely more than half of the jury voted against him. That was enough, however, to be found guilty and the 70 year old philosopher carried out his own death sentence by drinking hemlock poison.

So when did an apology become something other than a well-presented defense? Most English experts blame William Shakespeare. Shakespeare was known for creating new words and altering the usage of old words. Before the 1600's to give an apology was to defend your beliefs. Shakespeare changed that by using the word apology as *an admission that a person had done something wrong and felt remorse for it*.

I want you to keep in mind the *original* definition of apology as we open our Bibles to the book of 1 Peter, written some 1500 years before Shakespeare was born. Giving an old-time apology – a vigorous and compelling explanation – is the key idea in 1 Peter chapter 3:13-16.

For two months we've been studying this letter written by the apostle Peter near the end of his life. He wrote to a group of churches he had helped start in what is modern Turkey. The recipients of Peter's letter were discouraged. Their religion – believing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish Messiah – was considered a cult in the Roman Empire. Anyone who believed in Jesus could expect to be mocked, scorned, openly persecuted and subject to all kinds of injustice without legal recourse.

If we've come to understand anything about Peter's letter over the past two months, it's that Peter does not say what we expect him to say. Peter has little time for "poor me" talk. Instead of commiserating with his friends or telling them to be very careful who they talk to or what they said, Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:15.

1 Peter 3:15 Always be prepared to give an (apology). That's the Greek word.

Always be ready to be a witness. Be ready to give a defense.

- The NIV puts it "Always be prepared to give an answer
- ESV says "always being prepared to make a defense"
- NLT reads "always be ready to explain it"

The old meaning for "apology" is what's behind a theological specialty we call "Apologetics." You may be familiar with some of these apologetics books.

- Josh McDowell's *More Than a Carpenter* and *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* are both classics.
- Whitcomb and Morris's, *The Genesis Flood* has reassured many people the creation account in the Bible is plausible.
- Lee Strobel's, *The Case for Christ* is excellent as is
- Tim Keller's, *The Reason For God*.

Another brilliant apologist, Ravi Zacharias, said, "*The goal in most conflicts is to destroy your opponent. The goal in apologetics is to win your opponent.*"

Winning opponents is what Peter had in mind when he wrote that every believer should be an apologist. He's going to tell us how to do it and he will say you already have what you need to do it. You don't have to memorize the ontological, cosmological and teliological arguments for the existence of God. You don't have to become a skilled debater. Much easier than that.

Turn to 1 Peter chapter three if you're not already there. Our section for today begins in verse 13.

1 Peter 3:13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

It's a rhetorical question. If you reach out to help someone, your help is usually welcomed.

Twice in one day a couple weeks ago I gave jumpstarts to people in the Safeway parking lot next to our office. You see the hood up and someone standing next to the car – often holding a worthless set of Harbor Freight jumper cables in their hand. I have good jumper cables and that person clearly needs help. Who is going to harm you if you are eager *to do good*?

Peter described the "good" he had in mind back in verses 8-9. We saw this list last week.

1 Peter 3:8-9 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.

Do things motivated by these qualities and you'll be fine. Treat others fairly, pay your bills, don't speed, pay your taxes, take someone a meal, mow their lawn when they're gone, listen to them, pray for them, overlook small offenses and most of the time everything goes fine.

But not always. **Occasionally you encounter a truly disagreeable person. When that happens, it can really take you back. You may not have realized you were trying to do good to someone who had been hurt sometime in the past. As a result, they've become suspicious and fearful so at least initially they reject your help.** It may not be about you at all.

I landed one time at a little village up above the arctic circle. My first time there. Anytime an airplane lands in a small village people gather round to see who came. I was on skis so I landed on the frozen river in front of the village and before I even got the engine cover on a bunch of people came buzzing up on snowmobiles.

Some I had met in other villages so I immediately had several invitations to stay overnight with people. And then a guy I didn't know drove up. Someone told him I was a missionary and he went off. I mean he lost it. Yelling, gesturing, pushing -- people trying to restrain him. They were embarrassed by the scene he was making. He called me every name in the book, threatened to beat me if I didn't get back in the airplane and leave.

I found out later that 40 years earlier he had encountered a missionary who used the Bible like a club. This man and several others had literally pushed the offensive missionary into his wooden boat. They untied the boat and shoved him out into the current, screaming obscenities and threatening him if he should ever come back.

That was an unusual situation. Most people want to get along. If you're good to them they will be good to you – but not everyone. Peter warns that our sinful world there will be times when good will be met with evil, even when your motives are pure. Look at verse 14.

1 Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for what is right...

So you *may* be misunderstood. You *may* be maligned for being a Christ-follower. Just like Christ you *may* suffer for doing right. Jesus warned his disciples:

John 15:20 Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also... 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.

So Peter offers four pieces of advice for those times when you unexpectedly run into a buzz saw. The first is in the middle of verse 14.

#1 Consider yourself blessed.

1 Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

Last week we defined the word blessed using Numbers chapter 6, where God told Israelite priests to bless the people with these words:

Num. 6:24-26 The LORD bless you and keep you; (this is Hebrew poetry, where the following lines explain the first).

The LORD bless you and keep you. (Now here's what it means.)

the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; (when you are blessed by God, he notices you and grants you grace, and)

the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.

So to be blessed is to be a recipient of God's favor.

A very natural response when someone opposes you is to ask what you have done wrong. Why is this happening to me? That's a good question to ask but realize the answer may be that you'd done nothing to deserve mistreatment. If that's the case, God will bless you.

James chapter 1 says to consider it all joy when you encounter difficulties... because your faith will get stronger and you'll become more like Christ. Poor treatment may be a sign you are living right! If that's the case, consider yourself blessed. The second piece of advice Peter offers is in the last part of verse 14.

#2 Don't be consumed by fear (14c)

1 Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats;"

The Greek word for fear is the word from which we get our word phobia. A phobia is something you avoid at all cost. Like spiders or maybe bees.

Several weeks ago Andrea was at Hobby Lobby and she texted me a picture of this sign.

What doesn't kill you will make you stronger. Except bears. Bears will kill you.

Anytime you're in the wilderness you should fear bears. I have a healthy fear of bears. When I'm home in the evening, no matter what else I'm doing, I usually have on one computer screen a webcam showing bears fishing for salmon at Brooks Falls in Katmai National park. I'm fascinated by these bears.

A while back one male caught and ate 20 salmon in five hours. That's 90,000 calories. Three days ago I had the webcam on and watch what happened. (20 second video)

The National Park service was not amused and this guy will have some hefty fines to remind him that bears can kill you.

That's why I don't like them visiting Vicki's Villa. By the way, a friend checked on the Villa last week and said the bears have been back – wrecked a bunch of stuff. They are dangerous animals.

Years ago when bear came into the tent where Vicki and I were sleeping with our three young children Vicki suddenly became ferocious. I'm glad. Be concerned about bears.

You don't have to be concerned about rabbits. A rabbit can scare the living daylights out of you when you're walking quietly through the woods and a rabbit jumps up right at your feet. It's startling but not fearsome.

Do not fear and don't be frightened or troubled. Same word Jesus used John 14:1. Do not let

your hearts be troubled. Don't be overly concerned. The third piece of advice for when trouble ambushes you is in verse 15.

#3 Remember who is in charge. (15a)

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts revere (or acknowledge) Christ as Lord.

Not just savior. But also your Lord. Jesus said in Luke 6, "Why do you call me Lord if you do not do what I say?"

I want to back up for just a minute. Look at the end of verse 14 again. Notice that the statement, "Do not fear their threats, do not be troubled" is in quotes. That is because Peter borrowed the statement from Isaiah 8.

Now here's Isaiah 8 alongside 1 Peter 3:14. You see the "do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it" statements. But notice also the word Lord in both verses.

Isaiah 8 says "The LORD Almighty (when you see capital LORD that is the Hebrew name for God Almighty Yahweh. The LORD is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear.

1 Peter says in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. By quoting Isaiah 8 and exhorting Christians to revere Christ as Lord Peter is saying Jesus is God Almighty. He is one in the same with Yahweh. Peter's point is this:

- ▣ To revere Christ as Lord is to make Him the supreme object of your desires, your worship and service. Everything else is secondary.

When we revere Christ as Lord – when we submit to his authority – we have no reason to fear anyone or anything because the God of the universe is with us and within us. That's pretty good security. When opposition comes:

Consider yourself blessed
Don't be consumed by fear
Remember who is in charge, and fourth

#4 Be ready to give an "apology" for your faith (15b).

1 Peter 3:15 Always be prepared to give an answer (apologia) to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

Be prepared to give an apology. Notice two things:

First, notice that *you are to give an apologia to everyone who asks you*. I think too many Christians feel guilty because they're not more preachy. Peter does not command Christians in Roman cities to go downtown, stand on a street corner and shout about Jesus. He says, "give an apology to the people who want it." Give it to the people who ask you for it.

If they ask for it you simply respond.

2) The second thing I want you to notice is what to say. Peter says, "talk about you." Talk about the hope that you have!

When you have been changed by Christ, people will notice. They'll be curious. They will ask, "what happened to you?" That's when you tell your story and the end of verse 15 says,

1 Peter 3:15 But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Your apology should not be offensive. It's simply saying, "This is what I used to be. This is what I used to think. This is what I learned about Christ and this is what he's done for me. He is the reason I have hope."

Wayne Grudem wrote, "Such witness must be given with gentleness and respect, not attempting to overpower the person with the force of human personality or aggressiveness, but trusting the Holy Spirit himself to quietly persuade the listener."

It can be as simple as *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so*.

When Paul the apostle defended his faith before King Agrippa he didn't argue. He simply told his story. Here's Acts 26.

Acts 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his "apology." (That's the Greek word.) 2 "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my "apology" against all the accusations of the Jews,

He told how he was once a dedicated Pharisee bent on wiping out belief in Jesus. He told about heading to Damascus to arrest Christ followers and bring them back to Jerusalem.

Acts 26:13 About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'" "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," the Lord replied.

Paul then explained to King Agrippa how Christ totally changed life. Paul's apology was so convincing that the end of the chapter says,

Acts 26:30 The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. 31 After they left the room, they began saying to one another, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." 32 Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

To give an apology means to simply give a rational for why the love, joy, peace and hope of Christ leak out of you, even when things are not going well. People around will be curious. They will ask you to explain it.

And then you just talk because here is no argument stronger than your "apology" for why you have hope.