

# Making Your Case

Acts 21:40–22:10; 1 Peter 3:15-17

As followers of Christ, we should know what we believe and be able to explain it with confidence.

For the next 4 weeks we will study the Unit “THE CASE FOR HOPE”. This is a study of the Christian Faith. We sometimes get the impression that apologetics is all about knowing the answers to obscure questions about the details of our faith. We may still meet a few well-informed skeptics, but we're more likely to encounter people who know little or nothing about the Christian faith. We need to learn to explain the basics in ways they can understand. The first step is reviewing the basics for ourselves.

From a personal standpoint, I don't believe that we will be able to argue with someone and convince them that they should be a Christian. It is important that we show love when we talk to people about our Christian faith. How can you argue with what we say our Heavenly Father has done for us. But it is important that we understand our faith and why we believe what we believe.

We are hit on every side by different beliefs and philosophies and we may be called on to explain our views on different issues in our society today.

## **BE PREPARED (1 Peter 3:15-17)**

When Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives, each crisis becomes an opportunity for witness. We are “ready always to give an answer.” Our English word *apology* comes from the Greek word translated “answer,” but it does not mean “to say I am sorry.” Rather, it means “a defense presented in court.” “Apologetics” is the branch of theology that deals with the defense of the faith.

Every Christian should be able to give a reasoned defense of his hope in Christ, *especially in hopeless situations*. A crisis creates the opportunity for witness when a believer behaves with faith and hope, because the unbelievers will then sit up and take notice. This witness must be given “with meekness and fear [respect]” and not with arrogance and a know-it-all attitude. We are witnesses, not prosecuting attorneys! We must also be sure that our lives back up our defense. Peter did not suggest that Christians argue with lost people, but rather that we present to the unsaved an account of what we believe and why we believe it, in a loving manner. The purpose is not to win an argument but to win lost souls to Christ.

Our word “conscience” comes from two Latin words: *con*, meaning “with,” and *scio*, meaning “to know.” The conscience is that internal judge that witnesses to us, that enables us to “know with,” either approving our actions or accusing.

Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light of God's truth. If we persist in disobeying, the window gets dirtier and dirtier, until the light cannot enter.

How does a good conscience help a believer in times of trial and opposition?

- 1 - it fortifies him with courage because he knows he is right with God and men, so that he need not be afraid.
- 2 - gives us peace in our hearts; and when we have peace within, we can face battles without.
- 3 - removes from us the fear of what other people may know about us, say against us, or do to us. When Christ is Lord and we fear only God, we need not fear the threats, opinions, or actions of our enemies. “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” (Ps. 118:6).

**APPLICATION:**

- 1 – Being able to give an answer gives us an opportunity to shine in what would be darkness.
- 2 – Without a good conscience we cannot speak boldly when people ask us about the hope we have within.

If drive drunk and your picture is in the paper how much of witness would you have?

Do we welcome question and opportunity to defend our faith?

**KNOW THOSE TO WHOM YOU ARE TALKING (Acts 21: 40-22:3)**

The events on this passage occurred after Paul's arrest. Paul's heart must have been pounding as he address the whole city.

Warren Wiersby wrote: I was once called to be a character witness in a child custody case involving a man who had served time in prison. This was a new experience for me, and I was completely unprepared for the first question the attorney asked me: "Reverend, do you think that a man who has been a prisoner is fit to raise a child?" "That depends on the man," I replied bravely. "Some of the greatest men in history have been prisoners— John the Baptist, John Bunyan, and even the apostle Paul." "Simply answer yes or no!" said the judge curtly, and that was the end of my sermon.

Paul had been a leading rabbi in his day (Gal. 1:13–14), so he was certainly known to some of the people in the crowd. Note how Paul piled up his Jewish credentials: he was a Jew, a native of Tarsus, brought up in Jerusalem, trained by Gamaliel, a follower of the law, a zealous persecutor of the church, and a representative of the Sanhedrin. How could his countrymen not respectfully listen to a man with that kind of record!

Paul spoke in Hebrew. The Jews knew Greek but Hebrew was the language they learned from their youth up.

**APPLICATION:**

- 1 - The most powerful defense you can have is your own testimony.
- 2 – We should know the views of others that deny Jesus Christ as the only Son of God.

**SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW (Acts 22:4-10)**

It is difficult to imagine a comparable crowd today quietly listening to that kind of a testimony.

In his testimony, Paul affirmed that Jesus of Nazareth was alive. Paul saw His glory and heard His voice.

Vs. 4 – The Way – was the phrase that referred to believers.

Vs. 6-9 – Paul had in his hands letters from the high priest that he could arrest Christians and put them in prison or have them killed.

**APPLICATION**

- 1 – All sins of the past can be forgiven.
- 2 – We will not always be successful in convincing people to believe in Jesus Christ.