

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan

1 Peter 4

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The greater context for understanding chapter four of I Peter begins with Chapter 3:8-22 where the Apostle speaks of suffering and the trials of persecution that are sure to come for the followers of Jesus. He is talking about suffering for what is right, and not suffering as an evildoer. In the middle of that context is a familiar passage 3:15, which is quoted often about our testimony of trusting Jesus as Savior. But the passages around v.15 give us context to help us understand that verse better.

And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE IN DREAD, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who disparage your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. (I Peter 3:13-17 NASB)

Peter encourages those scattered among the Roman provinces to be faithful to live a godly life so that when they speak of the Lord Jesus and in

His name there will be harmony in what they say and how they live. V.15 is a word to all believers to "set aside the Lord in our hearts at all times" as the persecution raged against those early believers, they must acknowledge Jesus without fear. He is the only one who knows their heart and will deliver them. They must be ready to give a **defense** of their belief about who Jesus is.

The word translated defense is **ἀπολογία, apologia**, pronounced (*ap-ol-og-ee'-ah*) *apología* (from *apó*, "from" and *lógos*, "intelligent reasoning") properly, a well-reasoned reply; a *thought-out response* to adequately address the issue(s) that is raised. An "**apology**" in *classical* times had nothing to do with saying, "I'm sorry," but rather was a **reasoned argument (defense)** that presented *evidence* and supplied *compelling proof*.

The defense we give should not be given in a condescending or prideful manner, rather should be given in the spirit of meekness and respect. The idea of meekness is many times translated as **gentleness** in the New Testament Scriptures. God does not want His children to act ugly even when people are being ugly to us. We are to live our lives that when, notice not if, but when people say evil things about us and tell lies to harm us, we must live a life above reproach that when people examine our lives, those who say such things will be ashamed because they spoke such of us.

Prayer and Action Steps

Father in heaven, thank you for enabling us to live in such a way that we bring honor and praise to your name. May we ever be aware that people are constantly examining our lives and that we are to live a life above reproach, so those who speak evil of us will be ashamed when they look at the way we live and respond to their lies.

Amen