

who may ask for an explanation of our faith: "... Make a defense to everyone who asks you..." (1 Pet. 3:15). There is a great temptation not to give a defense or answer to certain people like family members (to keep the "peace") or coworkers and employers (to keep our job). However, we are commanded to make a defense to everyone, not just a few select people.

People Ask Because of Our Hope of Heaven in Christ

Often, the reason why people will ask for us to give an account, reason, or explanation of our faith in Christ is because of "the hope that is in [us]" – the hope of going to Heaven. Unlike the world who does not have this hope (1 Thess. 4:13b), Christians have a genuine hope of Heaven because of their faith in the Savior and Lord Jesus

Christ (1 Pet. 1:3-5; Heb. 6:19-20; Titus 2:13). Most people do not have much confidence or assurance in their salvation. Many are skeptical of the thought of an "afterlife" and demand an explanation. These are opportunities to give people the "answer" and share with them the soul-saving Gospel of Jesus Christ!

In Our Defense, We Must Respond As Christ Would.

The manner in which we defend ourselves is as important as the answer or explanation we give. In giving our defense, we are to speak "with meekness and fear" and "keep a good conscience" (1 Pet. 3:15-16). We should speak with boldness or confidence (Acts 13:46), but also keep our strength or power in check, lest we come across as harsh or rude. This re-

quires meekness – the gentle, mild, calm, and kind spirit of Christ (Mat. 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1). "Fear" or "reverence" is also important, treating each person with respect, just like we would want to be treated (Luke 6:31). Finally, a good conscience is absolutely essential. Let us not only be concerned with our conscience before God, but also before men, lest we appear as hypocrites (Acts 24:16). Effectively teaching the truth to others demands we live the truth ourselves: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5). Our manner of speaking and our integrity is vital to representing true Christianity: "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong" (1 Pet. 3:17). ~

We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre.
Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

Navarre church of Christ
8490 James M Harvell Rd
Navarre, FL 32566

Place Stamp Here

Assembly Schedule
Sunday

Bible Class for all ages ___ 9:00 AM
Morning Worship Service ___ 10:00 AM
Evening Worship Service ___ 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages ___ 7:00 PM

VISITORS ARE WELCOME!

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NAVARRE MESSENGER

Volume 4 Issue 36

September 27, 2009

Changing the Mission of the Church



by Steve Klein

Charles Paul Conn tells of living in Atlanta several years ago. He'd noticed a listing in the Yellow Pages for a restaurant called Church of God Grill. Out of curiosity he dialed the number. Conn recalls the phone conversation as follows:

A man answered with a cheery, "Hello! Church of God Grill!" I asked how his restaurant had been given such an unusual name, and he told me: "Well, we

had a little mission down here, and we started selling chicken dinners after church on Sunday to help pay the bills. Well, people liked the chicken, and we did such a good business, that eventually we cut back on the church service. After a while we just closed down the church altogether and kept on serving the chicken dinners. We kept the name we started with, and that's Church of God Grill."

While this may be an extreme example, the Church of God Grill

is not much different from what a lot of other churches have done in drifting away from God's purpose for the church. Examples could be multiplied of churches that are mainly in the business of providing day care, or health care, or shelter for the homeless, or recreation for their members, or civic service for their community. Apparently, many (if not most) think that it is the mission of the church to meet every real and perceived human need and desire - that somehow Christ died so we can have a basketball

team, potluck dinners and a Christian singles dating service.

If we just took the Scriptures and tried to determine what the purpose and mission of the church is, what conclusion would we reach? Notice what the church did or was to do in the following passages:

The church supported the truth. 1 Timothy 3:15 speaks of "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

The church spread the gospel. To the church at Thessalonica Paul wrote, "For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything" (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

The church supported preachers to preach the gospel. The apostle Paul commended the Philippian

church in Philippians 4:15-16: "Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities." Elsewhere he said that he took "wages" from churches to minister the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:8).

The church edified itself (built itself up) through worship and teaching. Ephesians 4:15-16 informs us that when members speak the "truth in love" and do their part in the work, it "causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." When it comes to the worship assembly, Paul commands in 1 Corinthians 14:26 "Let all things be done for edification." Notice that he didn't mention anything being done for entertainment!

The church helped truly needy

saints. Clearly the New Testament church was not the worldwide relief organization that modern men have made their churches out to be. The church helped some of its own needy (cf. Romans 15:26), but it was not charged with the mission of helping even all of them. In 1 Timothy 5:16, the Scripture says, "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows."

Can we not see that the church has a mission that is spiritual? Her purpose has been determined by the One who built her and gave His life for her! Making money by selling chicken dinners may be a fine endeavor for an individual to take on, but it is NOT the mission of the church! May the path of the church...ever be guided by the question, "Is this what God wants us to do?" ~



THE ANVIL AND THE HAMMERS

Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime.
Then looking in, I saw on the floor,
Old hammers worn out with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he, and then with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

"And so" I thought, "The anvil of God's word
for ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone."

---John Clifford

How a Christian Defends Himself

by Mark Larson

Knowing self-defense may not, at first, seem all that important for Christians to know. After all, Jesus commands: "... Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Mat. 5:39). Yet, Jesus is condemning personal retaliation or revenge, not self-defense in this passage (cf. Luke 22:38).

However, the kind of self-defense that should be most important to us as Christians is not the physical kind, but the spiritual kind: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh" (2 Cor. 10:3, NASB). To "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) and face our persecutors victoriously, we must use spiritual, not carnal means.

Christians who are living godly lives should expect to be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). When, for example, false charges of evil are brought against us or accusations are made against what we believe and practice, we should know how to defend ourselves.

Thankfully, the Lord, through the apostle Peter, provides us with the instructions we need to properly and effectively defend ourselves from our persecutors: "... And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, 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, yet with gentleness (meekness – KJV) and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame" (1 Pet. 3:14b-16).

"Sanctify Christ as Lord in Your Hearts"

First of all, Christians must "sanctify Christ as Lord in [their] hearts." This is the foundation to our "self-defense" as Christians. No matter what the world may say about Christ (Note: the actual word in the Greek text is Christos / Christ, not theos / God), Christ remains holy and pure within the heart of Christians. Though others may say Jesus was an imposter, a fraud, or merely a prophet, our faith in Jesus as Christ the Lord is maintained. Christ is "sanctified" within our heart, separate from the profane or sinful comments and criticisms of our persecutors.

Christ is Lord in our hearts and thus the Lord of our lives. In order to defeat the intimidation of men, total devotion to the Lord is required (cf. Mat. 22:37). Christians who decide beforehand that the Lord will determine what they will say or do will face no uncertainty or confusion about what to do when persecuted. Christians belong to the Lord and therefore

submit to the Lord and obey Him who is Master. Our loyalty lies first with Jesus Christ the Lord who has been given all authority (Mat. 28:18).

We Are to Be Ready at All Times to Defend Ourselves.

Today, the need to defend what we believe and what we practice in Christ is seen as unnecessary and even confrontational by many religious groups. Instead of standing for the truth, many have given in to secularism and the false teachings of society in order to get along with the world. Rather than refute the false charges or debate their persecutors, compromises are made in order to secure "peace" and "unity." Nevertheless, we are commanded to "make a defense" or "give an answer" for the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). We have an obligation to give a verbal defense, a reasoned statement or argument in response to the charges of our persecutors!

Such readiness to answer our persecutors is not meant to be an occasional preparation in which we speak up only when we are really "fired up" or upset about an issue. Instead, we are to be ready at all times. "... Always being ready to make a defense..." (1 Pet. 3:15). This requires prayer and a steadfast commitment to Bible study (Eph. 6:17-18; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15). Furthermore, we are to be ready to respond to anyone