**Reckless Belief; Attentive God**

Based on [1 Peter 3:13-22](http://biblia.com/books/esv/1Pe3.13-22)

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Easter 6

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When I was in High School, my best friend Ryan got a reckless driving ticket while on his motorcycle. **Those things aren't cheap**. He told me he wasn't guilty. He was given a reckless driving ticket—and my best friend--he swore up and down that **he wasn't driving recklessly**...and I believed him. So he asked me to help him challenge the ticket.

Ryan wanted help and I knew he was innocent because, in my heart, I believed him**. But I also knew that my personal belief wasn't worth a fig to his accuser,** or more importantly to the judge deciding the case.

Ryan was going to have to go before a judge, and an accuser, a police officer that was going to testify against him. I knew that if I just went as a witness to court and testified, "**Yes Judge, I believe that my friend was not driving recklessly, he told me and he wouldn't lie to me."** That was true; ***That*** I believed with my whole heart. But what I believed made no difference to the judge; nor would it to anyone who wasn't me. **I wasn't there, so I couldn't testify to what I *saw* only to what I believed, which isn't real admissible testimony for a defense.** No…I didn't ***see*** the incident and so I was not a reliable witness...but that didn't mean I couldn't help Ryan with his ***defense***.

So I asked Ryan, what the evidence against him was. I mean, “**What did the officer say when he pulled you over, before he wrote the ticket?”** Well, the officer had said that he'd accelerated too fast. So I asked him, "**Okay, well what was his evidence...*how did the officer know* you accelerated too fast?**" "He said he could tell by the sound of my bike."

Now,I knew one thing Ryan ***was*** guilty of...his motorcycle was loud, I mean ***really*** loud...*illegally* loud. **His exhaust system wasn't up to code and No doubt Ryan deserved a ticket for that**. But instead, he was given a reckless driving ticket because, allegedly, he'd accelerated too fast from a stop**. Now a police officer can't give you a ticket because he *thinks* you're going to fast--he needs real evidence...he needs a radar recording your speed to *prove* it.** Likewise I knew the police officer's "hearing" certainly wasn't proof of reckless acceleration. No radar, no real evidence, no evidence...no case.

So we went to court. Ryan made the argument and he won. 16 years old and he won. **And I want you to notice this...He didn't win because he was right, which he was. He didn't win because he was such a trustworthy guy, which he is**. He didn't win because he was the model teenager and a pillar of the community, which he wasn't. He was able to convince a judge because he thought through the *supposed* evidence against him, and found out he had a ***defense***.

Our Epistle lesson, written by the apostle Peter, says this: "In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to **make a defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." How do you honour Christ in your hearts?...by being ready to defend his being there.

Ladies and gentlemen, you and I live in the same world as Peter the apostle. It is a world that accuses and brings charges against Christians, not reckless driving, but of *reckless belief*. We are accused of believing in a naïve fairy tale called Christianity; **and this accusation demands a response from each and every one of us. It demands a defense. And it's no good to just say, "That's just what I believe", it might be true, but that's not going to convince a judge, nor should it.** It's no good to say, "Well, look at all of the good things I've done since I've had Christ in my heart." As a child, I used to be good around Christmastime because I believed Santa was watching and making his gift list. Did my good behaviour provide a defense for my belief in him?...of course not.

You know there are many people out there who will ask for a reason for your faith. Some of these people will want to undermine your faith; others are maybe just curious or perhaps even want to know the truth. The accusation is that your faith is based on a folk tale. You gotta ask, "**Oh, what is your evidence of that**?" And they will have none.

But you have evidence. **You have the written testimony of numerous apostles, like Peter, who saw this real man, Jesus of Nazareth dead on a Cross, and then three days later alive again, soon to ascend to heaven before his very eyes…a man who promised to do the same for you through Baptism.** We have written evidence that he did miraculous signs and wonders while he was on the earth. We know that his opponents couldn’t find his body in the tomb or elsewhere, and yet they still didn’t believe.

And besides all of this documentation, we have the continuing evidence of our sinful nature all around us. Have you ever met a perfect person? If you think so, then I bet you don't know them well enough. **We are all sinners in need of a savior; this fact is demonstrated on a daily basis before our very eyes**, and it is the very occasion for which the Word of God was written.

These are "defenses" for the faith that is in you. **Are they proofs beyond all doubting?...no they are not.** But as Christians we are not prosecutors, we don't have to *prove* Christianity beyond a doubt; our hope happens through the Holy Spirit who works faith in the heart. Jesus calls him, **"The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him or knows him. But You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."** Our hope is proved to our hears by the Holy Spirit, and to think we could prove Christianity without Him is blasphemous.

But it's not your job to ***prove*** Christianity, but to defend it. It needs a defense because it is under attack by the world who asserts our faith and our hope to be a lie, and *he who asserts must prove.* The world denies our hope in Christ, let ***them*** prove it. *Once I was at a wedding reception, seated at a table with the Pastor of the wedding. One of the guests asked him, "****How can you be a Christian Pastor today...I mean...now that we know the bible is chalked full of contradictions and inaccuracies****. And the Pastor responded with two words, "****Like what?****" The guest paused, thinking, then finally said..."****Well I don't know, I've never really read the bible****."* The Pastor he didn't say, "Well that's just what I believe in my heart" or "My God wouldn't lie to me." Two little words, "Like what", and the Pastor, in the eyes of all witnesses, parried the attack and defended the hope that was in him.

The world brings charges against our faith. **Don't hide from the charges...make them provide the evidence for their accusations**. And nine times out of ten, the only proof they will offer is their own skepticism and lack of faith.

So why is it we need to be reminded to defend our faith? **Because, as Peter promises, defending the faith will lead to suffering.**

**We all suffer, but we can hide from suffering for faith by keeping our hearts in Christ while keeping our heads in the sand.**

Keeping your head in the sand will defend you against all suffering for faith, but it is not a defense of the hope in Christ. **Remember, it was the servant who buried his talent in the sand that met the disapproval of the master**. But those who invested their talents in the world gained more. So too, the faith in our hearts must not be insulated from the world, but released into it and defended from its attacks.

God has told you in his own word, to be prepared for a defense. Therefore, i**f you don't have a reason for the faith that is in you, you have committed the sin of reckless belief**. Repent, get your head out of the sand and defend your faith. We are called to do so even if it exposes you to the suffering that will come when it is attacked. For the Spirit of Truth has given you this hope in Christ…not to bury it in the sand of your heart…but to give it to and defend it from the world.

That’s the “Law” part of the sermon for today…that you and I are guilty of retreating from the offenses of the world by burying our faith in our heart. But G**od tells us that we need to stick our neck out a little bit for the hope that is in us.** Not for our own sake, for God will save through even the weakest of faith, but we defend the faith for the sake of our neighbor, so that the Word of God is not forced out of the world, but let loose into it.

Repent; for you have sinned; but rejoice for Christ has put that sin away. When you played turtle and retreated into the house of your heart, Christ stuck out his neck for you on the cross. **Where you played possum with the faith you had received, Christ was our attentive God and lord, who lived by the faith and died because of it.**

**Ladies and gentlemen r**ejoice because you are saved. And this is not by your ability to defend the faith and suffer for it, but by your Baptism into the one who suffered all for you even Jesus Christ. For as Peter writes, “T**he Baptism which corresponds to [Noah’s Flood], *now saves you*, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”** You are accused of reckless belief, but your conscience is clean in baptism, the very place where your hope was given to you, and the savior became yours.