**1 Peter 3:13-22 (ESV)**

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, [15] but in your hearts regard 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; [16] yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. [17] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. [18] For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, [19] in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, [20] because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. [21] Baptism, which corresponds to this, 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, [22] who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

**“Honoring, Defending, Hoping”**

 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. One of my first jobs was to work for my church youth leader who owned a fuel recycling company. Now he recently moved his business to a new location and figured it would be nice to add on a sidewalk. The shock came when he also had the idea for me to do the work. With no experience with masonry, he gave some pointers on framing and off I went. It turned out halfway decent from what I could see. However, I found out later that while pouring the concrete there was a setback. The frame did not hold up from the weight of the concrete. A more experienced worker fixed the problem, which was I needed to put in stakes or form pins to help brace the frame.

 The answer from Sunday school of Jesus’ loves me is a nice frame too. However, confirmation recognizes life can be like concrete bearing down upon a Christian. If not properly held up, the promise of God’s salvation breaks from the weight. There must be stakes or supports to hold up that Gospel. The Catechism supplies what we need by the six chief parts to keep us firm upon Jesus and His Word. We consider today what Peter says, “Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard 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…” To regard Christ our Lord as holy is a good defense with all hopefulness.

1. **Only the Word of God opens our hearts to regard the holiness of Christ.**
2. The Ten Commandments reminds us that Jesus alone is holy.
* Since everyone fails in thought, word, and deed, we as sinners stand in great need before God.
* Those in Athens did not see the error of unholy idols, but Paul removed their blindness declaring, “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent…”
* Even Christians fall prey to unholy fears when troubles in life or enemies of the Gospel make us forget that Christ alone is Lord.
* Jesus opens hearts to see how He, “suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God…”
1. The Creed invites us to confess that Jesus is the holiness of God for our salvation.
* To say, “I believe” is to trust what God has promised by His Word to save me from all sin, death, and powers of the Devil.
* As St. Paul reminds us, “…faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).
* This Jesus rose after death to first proclaim His victory as Lord against the condemned and demons in hell that rejected the Gospel.
* The basis of new life is hearts opened to trust what Jesus promised, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:18b).
1. The Lord’s Prayer directs us to Jesus who in holiness hears us.
* Praying to dead saints or loved ones as if they are looking down on us is a false piety that removes Jesus from His place as Lord.
* Jesus ascended to all glory and power to be at the, “right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”
* Since the Holy Spirit came to be our helper, it only makes sense that the Spirit directs our prayers back to the Father in the Name of His Son.
* Karma seeks to avoid suffering, but the holiness of Jesus reveals suffering for good opens hearts finally to pray, “Thy will be done.”
1. **Only the Word gives our lives a good defense with all hopefulness in Christ.**
2. Baptism is a defense promising hope that God has done the saving.
* What was a flood of wrath at the time of Noah has now become a flood of grace drowning many people with Christ.
* The power of baptism is an extension that brings to us what Jesus achieved by His death and glorious resurrection.
* Rather than being our will, God’s will like the Flood is now in baptism, which saves you and anyone with forgiveness from Jesus.
* In other words, a good conscience toward God is when Jesus makes the unholy to be holy by the work of His sacrifice.
1. Confession is a defense filled with that hope to hear all our days.
* Where Christ walked perfectly to His cross, the Christian knows how the Old Adam in us must die daily with every doubt and disbelief.
* Confessing sin is a life before Jesus trusting that He comes with eagerness and joy to speak and preach forgiveness.
* Such love that removes sin does not leave us to fend for ourselves as the Psalmist says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105)
* Forgiveness does not come out of nowhere, but from the living Christ within His Church leading us with love God and love for others.
1. The Sacrament is a defense able to deliver hope fully from Jesus.
* Here in, with, and under the bread and wine the Lord Jesus makes Himself present to extinguish fear and doubt.
* Trust His Words that institute this meal for that is how Christ manifests Himself to us bringing the fruits of His sacrifice.
* Suffering for the Gospel can hurt and bring despair at times, but Christ calls us to sit at His kingdom where He serves with all faithfulness.
* The authority of Christ in the Sacrament is comfort and peace for He is the master at protecting and caring for His Church.

 There you have it. The frame of Jesus’ loves you needs supports to hold together that Gospel from the weight of life. The Ten Commandment, The Creed, The Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, Confession, and The Lord’s Supper make more than a sidewalk. They actually form your life in the shape of the cross being a witness to the world. Some will have questions, others be in wonder, others mock and challenge, while still others persecute.

A naïve Christianity will cave, but how can we ever be prepared enough to given an answer? To regard Christ our Lord as holy is a good defense with all hopefulness for us. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.