

# Defending the Faith – In Action

By Paul Ponchot

We are called upon by Peter in 1 Peter 3:15 to “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 and reverence.” As Christians we must never take this lightly. Defending the faith (field of apologetics) is an essential part of our walk with Christ.

As members of the Lord’s church, and a part of the Restoration Movement, it is no surprise that most preachers have a variety of apologetical encounters on the subject of baptism. Some of these encounters take place when we meet people who are genuinely seeking to know what they need to do to be saved. At other times, these opportunities are of a more confrontational nature, as we deal with those who oppose what the Scripture teaches about the proper place of baptism in the plan of salvation. Either way, standing on the truth of God’s Word is vital.

Several years ago, during our midweek Bible study, a lady visited the church where I serve. She was well received, enjoyed the assembly, and began attending every Wednesday and the occasional Sunday morning. It did not take long for her to hear the Biblical plan of salvation and ask if she could speak to me. Since she had a denominational background, she took issue both with baptism being for the forgiveness of sins and the time the gift of the Holy Spirit is given. She informed me she had asked Jesus into her heart earlier in life and was convinced God had forgiven her and accepted her into His family (she had never been immersed).

I politely pointed out the Bible does not teach “asking Jesus into your heart” as a part of God’s plan of redemption. I shared other Scriptures with her that deal with baptism and its clear connection to salvation, but she was not convinced. To her credit, she continued to attend. One evening she asked if we could meet the following Wednesday before Bible study to settle the baptism issue once and for all. I was excited to do so.

I began by asking her if she believed the Bible was the Word of God, was absolute in its truth, and if we were bound by Scripture. She agreed wholeheartedly. I took her to Matthew 16:13-20, and we explored this passage where Jesus promises Peter the keys to the kingdom. I explained that Peter had answered correctly the question of Jesus, “Who do you say that I am?” Based on Peter’s confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus told Peter he would be given the keys of the kingdom and the authority to use those keys. I said Peter used those keys in Acts 2 when he preached to the Jews at Pentecost and in Acts 10 when he preached the Gospel to the first Gentile converts to Christianity. I asked if she agreed with my understanding of all of this, and she did.

Next we went to John 14-16 (14:15-19; 14:25-27; 15:26-27; 16:5-16), to take a look at the promises Jesus made to the Apostles about the Holy Spirit being another advocate to these men and inspiring them with the message of the New Testament. When we finished looking at these passages I asked again if she agreed with my understanding of them. She did.

Our next stop was a brief word of explanation on John 20:19-21, Luke 24:45-49, and Acts 1:4-5, 7-8. She also agreed with my understanding of these texts.

Last of all, we took a look at Peter’s sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2. We talked about Peter using the keys to the kingdom as he preached the Gospel to the Jews gathered there. We talked about their question in verse 37, Peter’s response in verse 38, and God’s promise in verse 39, which involves salvation based on repentance and baptism for the Jews hearing Peter’s message, their offspring, and all who are far off (that’s us). I explained that on this day Peter used the authority given to him by Christ Himself. What Peter preached about salvation, and the conditions on which it is given, on the day the church began would become normative for the rest of history. His use of the “keys” given to him by Christ affected not only the Jews of his day but all of us who would follow these redemptive conditions.

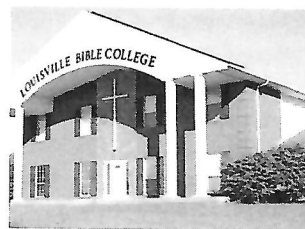
I admit to you this was a rather involved approach. It was made possible because this woman already had a religious background that included sufficient familiarity with the Bible (even if some of it was in error). She went home that night, called me a couple of days later, and we baptized her into Christ. She is still with us. Praise God for His Word and His marvelous plan!

(As a parenthetical note, there are people who believe that baptism was only for the Jews at Pentecost, not for us modern Gentiles. However, in Acts 10:47-48, Cornelius and his household were baptized into Christ after Peter used the “keys” to preach the Gospel to them. The Jewish church had kept the Gentiles from being baptized by not sharing the message of the Gospel with them, despite Jesus commanding them to go into all the world.) (RH)

*Paul Ponchot is an evangelist with South Jersey Evangelism and the Cumberland County Christian Church in Vineland, NJ. He has served there for 28 years with his wife Ronda. Their children are Jillian, Chris and his wife Grace, and Kayla.*

## LOUISVILLE BIBLE COLLEGE

*Rebooting, Rebuilding, And Returning To Our Roots*



### LBC offers:

- Low Tuition
- Conservative Professors
- Convenient Location
- Commuters' Schedule
- Short Term Courses Available
- Theology and Practical Ministry Courses

Call us today at (502) 231-LBC1 (5221)!

**Bringing Truth Into Focus**