

## 37. Defense of the Gospel

April 27, 2014

Do you remember the time when you were but a babe in Christ? You could barely tell the difference the Gospel of John and the Book of 1 John and where to find them in the Bible. But one thing for sure though, you were very excited about your new - found faith in Jesus Christ. All of your past guilt was washed away like snow on the warm sunny day. Your heart was filled with hope and joy.

Then, out of blue you get these questions about your faith in Jesus Christ – “If God is real and good, why is it that the world is filled with so much violence? How are you going to explain that?” Or “How do you know that God is real? I don’t see Him. I cannot hear His voice.” You didn’t know how to explain to them because you didn’t have knowledge of the proper theologies in Christianity.

But you did know that you were no longer the same person as the week before you were saved. Even your family members, friends, and your coworkers could tell. So you started to speak about your own conversion – how the Lord Jesus changed your life – to that hostile person. All of sudden, that person was silent and listening to your testimony.

That is the similar situation where Paul found himself in Jerusalem about two thousand years ago. After his third missionary journey he was in the temple and minding his own business during the feast of the Day of Pentecost. Some Jews from Asia who hated Paul instigated a riot to kill Paul once and for all. If the Roman soldiers had not intervened in the nick of time, Paul would have been dead by their hateful fists.

I strongly believe that the Lord has special instructions for the defense of the Gospel through apostle Paul. Let’s open our hearts to receive His teaching.

### A. SPEAKING TO THE JEWS

*Acts 21:37-22:2 Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to you?” He replied, “Can you speak Greek? 38 Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?” 39 But Paul said, “I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.” 40 So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying, 1 “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.” 2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.*

The commander thought that Paul was an Egyptian renegade, but he was surprised that Paul spoke fluent Greek. Once Paul got the permission from the commander, he switched to Aramaic, the language of the Jews in Palestine. This was an opportunity Paul had waited a lifetime for. He wanted the Jewish people to come to know Jesus as their Savior like he did.

Paul gave a magnificent defense. He actually used the word ‘defense’ in v1. In Greek it is the word ‘apologia,’ from which we get our word ‘apologetics.’ It refers to a branch of theology of the defense of Christianity. We’ll talk more about it a little later.

From v3 to v21, Paul gave his own personal testimony. One of the most powerful witnesses you can give a person is the testimony of your own personal experience with Jesus Christ. They might try to ignore the existence and presence of God, and they may insist on their own interpretations of the Bible, but they cannot deny how your life is changed.

Please consider these 5 suggestions for your testimony:

**1) You want to be listened to, so be interesting , and not long.**

It's a contradiction to talk about how exciting Christ really is in an uninteresting and boring way. Remember to guard against religious clichés, jargon, and hard-to-understand terminology. You don't want your testimony to be lengthy. 10 minutes at the maximum.

**2) You want to be understood, so be logical.**

Think of your salvation in three phases and construct your testimony accordingly:

(a) before you were born again – the struggles within, the loneliness, lack of peace, absence of love, unrest, and fears

(b) the decision that revolutionized your life

(c) the change – the difference it has made since you received Christ.

**3) You want the moment of your new birth to be clear , so be specific.**

Don't be vague. Speak of Christ, not the church. Emphasize faith more than feeling . Be simple and direct as you describe what you did or what you prayed or what you said. This is crucial!

**4) You want your testimony to focus on Jesus, not your past.**

Some Christians think that they should let others know that how horrible they were before Christ' intervention. A brief description of your past will do, but focus on how Jesus changed your life.

**5) You want your testimony to produce results, so be warm and genuine.**

A smile breaks down more barriers than the hammer blows of cold, hard facts. Let your enthusiasm flow freely. It's hard to convince someone of your sheer joy and excitement of knowing Christ if you're wearing a face like a jail warden or you just drank a gallon of lemon juice. Above all, be positive and courteous. Absolutely refuse to argue. Nobody I ever met was "argued" into the kingdom. Insults and put-downs turn people off.

No persuasive technique will ever take the place of your personal testimony . If you have not discovered the value of telling others how God changed you, you 've missed a vital link in God's plan for reaching the lost through you.

## **B. WHAT? GENTILES?**

We are not going to go over Paul's encounter with the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus because we already studied in chapter 9 of this Book.

*Acts 22:21-23 Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'" 22 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" 23 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air,*

That's all it took, just one word 'Gentiles'. Red lights flashed and sirens buzzed immediately in the minds of this nationalistic Jewish audience. Now they wanted the blood of Paul and they didn't care how. This Jewish mob was outraged at the thought that God's salvation could be given freely to believing Gentiles.

A very important thing we must learn here is that we, too, can fall into the same kind of spiritual elitism like these Jewish people. Let's not ever think that we became the children of God by any of our good behaviors. We had nothing to make that privileged list. Purely by the grace, mercy, and the love of God, the Lord Jesus extended His scepter toward us so that we became Christians, the followers of God.

Let's not ever forget that where we came from – the bottomless pit of hopelessness, spiritual tumult and confusion, vain self-righteousness and self-importance that only led us further down to utter loneliness and despair. Then, out of heaven, our gracious God reached down and grabbed our filthy hands to lift us up out of that pit of murk and mire, and set us on the Solid Rock that is immovable. He draped us with His righteousness and holiness, washed us from our filth with the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God. It is not by us, but by Him.

So, how can we look down on unbelievers whether they are into cults, occult, homosexuality, and many other ungodly lifestyles? We were there amongst them. And how can we not tell them about Jesus the Savior? We need to do that.

What I am about to teach you will give good reasons for you to know how to defend your faith in Christ that is apologetics when you are asked by unbelievers so that they, too, can be lifted up out of their pits by God's grace:

**1) Because we are commanded to defend our faith in Jesus Christ.**

*1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*

**2) Because it helps Christians know their faith.**

This is something that is desperately lacking among believers. Most don't know much about their faith, let alone be able to describe the two natures of Christ, His physical resurrection, or even to tell the difference between justification and sanctification. Apologetics helps to define and defend what the truth of the Gospel is.

**3) Because apologetics is an attempt to keep people out of hell.**

God takes sin very seriously, and He will punish those who are not saved by their own choice. As Christians, we should be motivated to present the truth of salvation in Jesus to them. We should not sit idly by and ignore the dilemma of the unbeliever. We need to not only defend God's Word and truth, but also present the Gospel to all people so they can escape the judgment to come as well.

**4) Because we need to counter the bad image that Christianity has received in the media and in culture.**

Televangelists and their scandals – both sexually and monetarily – are a disgrace to Christianity. The Catholic Church hasn't helped with its scandals involving priests' molestations. On top of that, the media is extremely biased against Christianity while they are cordial to other religions, and you will see negative opinions of Christianity promoted everywhere.

**5) Because there is a constant threat of apostasy in Christian churches.**

Such is the case with many main line denominations, which openly advocates the support of homosexuality in violation of scripture – Romans 1:18-32. As of 2002, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is in risk of apostasy by entertaining the idea of accepting homosexual relationships into church. The United Church of Christ has set up a \$500,000 scholarship fund for gay and lesbian seminarians and urged wider

acceptance of homosexuals by other denominations. They'd rather embrace the latest social trends over the truth of the Word of God. That's the apostasy of the churches we see around us.

#### **6) Because the many false teachings are out there.**

- Mormonism teaches that God used to be a man on another world, that he brought one of his goddess wives with him to this world, that they produce spirit offspring that are born into human babies, and that you have the potential of becoming a god of your own world.
- The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that there is no Trinity, that Jesus was Michael the Archangel, that there is no hell, and that only 144,000 people will go to heaven.
- Atheism denies God's existence, openly attacks Christianity and is gaining ground in public life and schools.
- Islam teaches that Jesus was not God in flesh, that Jesus did not rise from the dead, and that He did not atone for our sins. It teaches that salvation is partly based on one's works and partly based on Allah's grace. It teaches that the Holy Spirit is the angel Gabriel (Surah 2:97; 16:102); and that Muhammad was greater than Jesus.

Even within the Christian church there are false teachings. We can see that from both within the Christian church and outside of it, false teachings are bombarding believers (and nonbelievers) all over the world.

#### **7) Because the rise of immorality in America is a threat not only to society but also to Christianity.**

This is a serious issue because an immoral society cannot last long. The Barna Research group statistics show that 64% of adults and 83% of teenagers said moral truth depends on the situation that you are in, and 19% of the adult population believes that "the whole idea of sin is outdated." Joel Osteen who has the biggest church in American doesn't talk about sin in his sermons. He just smiles and everything is good and OK.

#### **8) Because schools are not friendly to Christianity.**

Many school teachers are brainwashed by their college professors who are against God and Christianity. Non-Christian schools adopt sex education that promotes homosexuality and fornication to young students as early as 2nd grade.

Their history books were rewritten to remove the Christian heritage in America and they systematically try to blot God out of our children's hearts.

The fact is that Christianity is under attack in the world, and we need apologetics to give rational, intelligent, and relevant explanations of Christian viability to the critics and the prejudiced who would seek to undermine the teachings of our Lord Jesus.

### **C. APPLICATION**

**Present your subjective personal testimony and back it up with the objective facts from the Word of God. Now you have the solid first step of the Christian apologetics.**

If there was ever a time that apologetics is needed, it is now. Get into your Bible and study; memorize Scriptures; practice your personal testimony so that you can be prepared in season and out of season. This is not a job for pastors, elders, deacons, or evangelists. IT IS YOUR JOB.