

## #123 “The Role of Apologetics”

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Apologetics is defending the faith and giving reasons for believing what we believe. It breaks my heart that many criticize apologetics as not being applicable to a post-modern culture. They assert that apologetics mattered for the modernists who valued intellect, reason, and the mind, but they argue that apologetics is no longer useful today in this post-modern, post-Christian culture. Yet apologetics has a Biblical basis. Apologetics exists to defend the faith and make it credible publicly and, more importantly, to give ammunition and assurances to the Christian. Personally, I am grateful for all of the apologetic training that I received while I was young because it helped sustain my faith during times of intense Satanic onslaught.

Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." If we choose not to take advantage of the knowledge and truth that is available to us, we make ourselves vulnerable to Satanic deception. We also will be prone to fear when we try to share our faith and come across someone more learned than we. Yes, we always reserve the right to say "I don't know" or "I will get back to you," but those comments should diminish as the Christian grows into maturity.

Paul says in Colossians 2:2 that he wants the believers at Colossae to be "attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself." That is a potent statement for the legitimacy of apologetics. Paul is saying that there is immense spiritual value in having a complete assurance of understanding because it will result in a truer and fuller knowledge of Christ. If we want to grow to Christian maturity and really begin to understand and appreciate our Savior, we need to have our faith anchored in assurance.

Somebody may say that their faith is rock solid even without apologetics to assure them. Paul continues in verse 4, "I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument." Even if we think our faith is sure, we can easily be deceived if we aren't aware of what we are dealing with. In verse 8 Paul says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Apologetics is extremely helpful in presenting Christianity as credible and valid, but it also exists to keep the Christian from being taken by deception and philosophy of men. Do we have a clearly articulated worldview and philosophy of life? Do our churches do anything to help teach us about why we can have confidence in what we believe? Is it reasonable to believe the creation account? Can we be sure that Jesus is really God? Is the Bible historically or scientifically flawed? Can it be trusted? These are questions that deserve answers. Apologetics is not essential for faith given that Christ and the Scriptures are sufficient in and of themselves, but growing in knowing why Christ and His Word are defensible and trustworthy does indeed bolster faith. In addition, it helps us defend the faith in the public forum, particularly as we engage in evangelism.

1 Peter 3:15 says, "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 and reverence." So first of all we need to know what we believe so that we can clearly share about Christ when we are asked. Second, it is helpful to be able to reason with people as to why Christ is the Savior of the world and why the Bible is the Word of God. Paul did this in his defense in Athens in Acts 17:16-34, offering proof for the message he preached (v. 31). We must ask ourselves if we can give a defense or a reason for the faith that we have. This is not just a command to the "intellectual" Christians. Most Christians are capable of understanding why it is reasonable to believe what they believe, and if nothing else, it is of great encouragement to know that some other Christian can defend the faith, even if the arguments are hard for us to remember.

In Jude 3, we read, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." The natural course of things is to go from order to disorder, from responsibility to irresponsibility, from organization to destruction, and from truth to error. This is why the truth of Scripture must be contended for. We need to fight for every verse. All Scripture is God-breathed. It is for our ability to function as mature Christians. We must be able to defend it, especially in an increasingly hostile, diverse, and global environment.