

April 24, 2005
Shepherd's Community Church
Pastor Paul S. Brown
1 Peter 3:8-4:6

“Growing in Your Relationship with the Lost World: *Apologetics*”

Intro:

- _____ = to speak in defense; to answer; a reasoned statement or argument
 - Phil. 1:7; Jude 3; Acts 17:2-3
 - John 13:34-35; 17:20-21
 - 1 Peter 3:15

Background: 1 Peter =

- S _____
- S _____
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- S _____

I. _____ in the Midst of Suffering – 3:8-17

A. Be _____ & Be _____ – 3:8-14a

B. Be _____ & Bear _____ – 3:14b-17

II. _____ in the Midst of Suffering – 3:18-22

A. Jesus was _____ & _____ - v. 18

B. Jesus Bore _____ – v. 19-20

C. Jesus will _____ Us & _____ His Enemies – v. 20-22

III. _____ in the Midst of Suffering – 4:1-6

A. Renew Your _____ and _____ – v. 1-3

B. Remind Yourself of Two _____ – v. 4-6

1. The _____ – v. 4-5

2. The _____ – v. 6

Discussion Questions:

1. How capable do you feel to make a “defense” of the faith? What specific questions would you feel you could not answer at this time?
2. How should our faith influence the way we face suffering? How does suffering righteously provide opportunities for us to share our faith?
3. Read through the character qualities in 1 Peter 3:8-14a. Which of those is the strongest in your life right now? Which of those is the weakest? What excuses might people make for being weak in those areas (i.e., personality, etc.)? What could you do to begin growing in each of those areas?
4. According to Romans 15:13, joy and peace accompany hope in the life of the believer. Are these things obvious in your life? If not, why not? What needs to change in your relationship with Jesus for these things to be characteristic of your life?
5. What does it mean (in very practical terms) to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts”? How would doing that make it easier to not fear man and to be ready to give a defense?
6. Why is it important to give our defense with gentleness and reverence? What would be the opposite of that? Is the ultimate goal to simply win an argument? If not what is it?
7. Why is Noah a good example for us? How long was he building an ark? What else was he doing during that time? (See 2 Peter 2:5) How does this encourage us to say no to sin and proclaim the gospel even if it leads to suffering?
8. How does suffering impact my ultimate purpose in life and my priorities? Are your current purposes / priorities what they should be? Are they eternally focused? If not, what can you do about it this week?
9. Do you ever feel envious of the “fun” that the world is having? What should we live for instead of the lusts of the flesh? Are you really living for that? Is it obvious?
10. What will be the ultimate end of those that reject the gospel of Jesus Christ? How might our lives be a sweet aroma of the knowledge of Jesus to them? (See 2 Cor. 2:14-17)

Guidelines for Apologetics:

1. **Pray** - It is the Lord who opens the heart and mind, not you (Acts 16:14). Ask God for guidance (John 14:14). Ask for blessing in your understanding (James 1:5) and your speech (Col. 4:6). Ask the Lord to also open their understanding to God's word (Luke 24:45).
2. **Memorize Scripture** - Few things are as powerful when defending the faith as being able to cite chapter and verse of a particular biblical answer (Psalm 119:11; 2 Tim. 3:16).
3. **Memorize the locations of information** whether it be in cult material, secular material, or any other source you've got. - It is extremely valuable to know material in different disciplines. Of course, you cannot know everything, but you can memorize a few pertinent facts about Mormonism, or evolution, or philosophy, or the Bible, or whatever else may be needed. You will learn what you need as you witness.
4. **Listen to what is being said to you** - and respond to what is said. It is by listening that you will then know what to say. Listen for errors in logic. Listen for motives, for hurts, for intent. Listen.
5. **Don't interrupt** - This is just common courtesy. You need to earn the right to speak. Just because you have an answer doesn't mean it must be heard right away. When interruptions become the norm, learning is thrown out the window.
6. **Don't be afraid to make mistakes** - One of the best ways to improve is to discover your weaknesses. The best way to discover your weaknesses is when mistakes uncover them for you.
7. **Study what you discover you don't know** - If you don't know something study it. Get books and read. Write down what you learn.
8. **Don't be afraid to take a chance** - This takes real faith. All you have to do is be available, speak up, and take a chance in defending the Christian faith. You'll be surprised at how well you do. And when you mess up, don't worry, review guideline # 6.
9. **Rehearse** - Perhaps the best place to do apologetics is in your head. Think of a situation, a scenario that you need to have an answer for, and develop an answer. Practice in your mind. Try and corner yourself and then get out of it.
10. **Read Books that deal with what you need to know** - The knowledge of others is invaluable. Isaac Newton said, "If I have reached the stars, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." In other words, he learned from others.

Some Basic Objections Answered:

1. "What about those who never hear the gospel?" (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:18-20)

- Everyone is guilty of breaking God's law (Romans 3:23). All people have a moral code and all have violated it. The Bible clearly tells us that all are sinners. All men are given light in seeking after God. If they live up to that light God gives them more light (Matthew 7:7-11). We who have heard will be judged on what we have done with Jesus.
- The penalty for sin does not change because of ignorance. Everyone is equally responsible for his or her sinful rebellion against God's law (Romans 6:23).
- There is only one way we can be saved, through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
- All men know there is one true God and are accountable for having rejected both the knowledge of God made clear in creation and in their conscience (Romans 1:18-20; 2:14-25).
- The real issue is that *you have heard the gospel* and will stand accountable to God. Will you repent or continue to live in rebellion and disobedience?

2. "Why does evil exist? If God is so good and powerful, why can't He stop evil?"

- All of man's problems (every incident of sickness, disease, crime, war, etc.) are the result of sin. Sin is in the world, because God gave man freedom to decide, and man chooses to sin (Genesis 3; Romans 3:10; 5:12). Evil is man's reaction against God's law.
- The question implies that if a good God exists, then evil shouldn't because God being all powerful should stop it.
- We need to ask and answer two questions. **First**, what is evil? It is that which is against God. It is anything morally bad or wrong. It is injurious, depraved, wicked. Some acceptable examples might be murder, rape, stealing, lying, and cheating. **Second**, if we want God to stop evil do we want Him to stop all evil or just some of it? In other words, if just some of it then why? If He were to stop only part of the evil, then we would still be asking the question, "Why is there evil in the world?"

Let's suppose that someone was about to commit murder. God would have to stop him, maybe whisper in his ear, or if that didn't work do something a little more drastic like have something fall on him, or stop his heart, or make his hands suddenly fall off. Anyway, God would have to do something.

What if somebody wanted to steal? God would have to stop him too, right? Undoubtedly, God's imagination would permit a more practical method than I have suggested, but the end results would be the same.

What about lying? If someone were to tell a lie, then to be consistent wouldn't you want God right there to stop that person from lying? After all, He couldn't let any evil occur could He?

Let's take it a step further. Suppose someone thought something evil. Then, of course, God would have to step in and prevent him from thinking anything bad at all, right? The end result would be that God could not allow anyone to think freely. Since everyone thinks and no one thinks only pure thoughts, God would be pretty busy and we wouldn't be able to think. Anyway, at what point do we stop, at the murder level, stealing level, lying level, or thinking level? As your questions implies, if you want God to stop evil, you would have to be consistent and want Him to do it everywhere all the time, not just pick and choose. It wouldn't work.

Evil is in this world partly because we give it its place but ultimately because God, in His sovereignty, permits it and keeps it under His control.

Then you might say, "Couldn't He just make us perfect and that way we wouldn't sin?" He already did that. He made a perfect angel, Satan, but he sinned. He made a perfect man, Adam, and he sinned. He made a perfect woman, Eve, and she sinned. God knows what He is doing. He made us the way we are for a purpose. We don't fully understand that purpose, but He does.

- God is sovereign; He has the right to do as He wishes. He has the right to permit evil for accomplishing His ultimate will. How can He do that? Simple, look at the cross. It was by evil

means that men lied and crucified Jesus. Yet God in His infinite wisdom used this evil for good. It was on the cross that Jesus bore our sins in His body (1 Peter. 2:24) and it is because of the cross that we can have forgiveness of sins.

- Consider the biblical example of Joseph in the Old Testament. He was sold into slavery by his brothers. Though they meant it for evil, God meant it for good (Gen. 50:20). God is so great that nothing happens without His permission, and in that permission His ultimate plan unfolds. In His plan He is able to use for good what man intends for evil. God is in control.

- God can stop all evil, but to do so requires He destroy every person since “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23). If God were to stamp out all evil at midnight tonight who would be left at 12:01 a.m.? Since evil is in every person (Jeremiah 17:9), no one would survive.
- The Bible says He will stop all who do evil (Psalms 5:4-5) and there is an eternal penalty for everyone who is evil (Romans 6:23). The question is, what will you do about the evil in your own heart? What will you do to be reconciled to God? What will you do to be forgiven and set free from the penalty of your sin?

3. **“In the end, everyone will be saved. It really doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you have faith.”**

- Believing something doesn’t make it right. Neither sincerity nor intensity of faith can create truth. Faith is no more valid than the object in which it is placed. Believing doesn’t make something true and refusing to believe a truth does not make it false. The real issue is the question of truth.
- We are not the ultimate authority. Even the most sincere people are often sincerely wrong. James 2:19 states that even demons know who God is, but that doesn’t save them.
- We do not define right and wrong. God is the Creator and Owner and He defines right and wrong (Isaiah 44:6-8).
- C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* noted, “As in arithmetic, there is only one right answer to a sum, and all others are wrong.”
- There is only one solution for man’s sin problem (John 14:6; Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:5; James 2:10).
- There is only one Name by which we are saved. All other religions amount to a human attempt to work their way to perfection. The goal of religion is for man to refine himself and to make himself worthy of heaven (which is impossible). There is only one narrow gate, and there are few that find it (Matthew 7:13-14).

4. **All religions are different paths to the same place.**

- If all religions are different paths to the same place then why do the paths contradict each other? Does truth contradict itself?
- Buddhism is pantheistic and says there is no personal God and everyone can reach Godlikeness on his own. Islam says that Jesus was just a prophet and not the only way to God. Christianity says that there is a personal God and that the only way to Him is through Jesus (John 14:6). If these three religions are, as you say, different paths to the same place, then why do they contradict each other? Does truth contradict itself?

5. **“God will accept me since I’m a good person. He knows my heart and that I have done a lot of good works.”**

- How many items must one steal to be a thief? Only one. How many sins must you commit to be a sinner? Only one. Even the slightest sin makes man guilty (James 2:10; Matthew 5:21-30).
- The Bible says that all of man’s good deeds are worthless before God (Isaiah 64:6). Since all are sinners (Romans 3:23) no one will be saved by their good works or intentions (Ephesians 2:8-9).

6. **“Isn’t the Bible full of errors?”**

- Ask them to show you exactly what they are referring to?

- The Bible is without error as it is God’s words (2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:21).
- The Bible is 66 separate books written by over 40 different authors on three different continents in three different languages over a period of at least 1500 years. The authors had varied background and wrote on many different subjects. Some of these authors were kings, physicians, teachers, farmers, fishermen. They wrote about law, history, science, poetry, and prophecy. Yet these books fit together in complete harmony as perfectly as the parts of the human body. For 40 authors with such varied backgrounds to write on so many subjects over a period of so many years in absolute harmony is a mathematical impossibility!
- It has stood the test of archaeology, science, history and prophecy without one proven error!
- **Scientific Accuracies in the Bible**
 - The spherical shape of the earth (Isaiah 40:22).
 - The earth is suspended in nothing (Job. 26:7).
 - The stars are innumerable (Gen. 15:5).
 - The existence of valleys in the seas (2 Sam. 22:16).
 - The existence of springs and fountains in the sea (Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Prov. 8:28).
 - The existence of water paths (ocean currents) in the seas (Psalms 8:8).
 - The water cycle (Job. 26:8; 36:27-28; 37:16; 38:25-27; Ps. 135:7; Eccl. 1:6-7).
 - The fact that all living things reproduce after their own kind (Gen. 1:21; 6:19).
 - The nature of health, sanitation, and sickness (Gen. 17:9-14; Lev. 12-14).
 - The concept of entropy; that energy is running down (Psalms 102:26).

7. **“I don’t believe God exists.”**

- Man’s problem is moral, not rational/intellectual (a lack of information). Man knows that God exists due to creation (Genesis 1:3; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). God’s law is inscribed on man’s conscience (Romans 2:14-15). Man refuses to recognize this, suppressing the truth under layer upon layer of sin (Romans 1:18-23).
- Ask them, “How can you prove God doesn’t exist?”
 - How do you account for the earth (chance or creation)?
 - Who sets the standard for right and wrong?
 - You cannot prove He doesn’t exist, so why do you make that claim?
 - Is it because you don’t want His laws to govern you? Do you want to define what is right and wrong?
- We prove God exists by the fact that without Him there is no explanation for anything that does exist. Without God we cannot explain creation or defend why it is wrong to murder and steal. Who defines right and wrong?
- To say, “I don’t believe in God therefore He doesn’t exist,” is like saying, “I don’t believe in gravity, therefore I can jump off a cliff without getting hurt.” Gravity exists whether you believe in it or not.
- To say “I don’t believe God exists” is to claim ultimate knowledge. Do you have infinite knowledge? Are you absolutely sure that God does not exist because you know everything?

8. **“We cannot really know what happens when we die.”**

- The Bible is very specific about what happens after death. There are only two options: either you are immediately in Heaven or bound for Hell.
- The Bible also tells us that we only get one opportunity – no reincarnation in order to get more chances. We die once and then we face God in judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

9. **“Christians are hypocrites. Salvation is just a right to sin.”**

- There are many who claim to be Christians but are not.
- The simple test of whether or not someone is truly a Christian is whether or not he or she obeys Jesus.
- 1 John 5:3 and John 14:15 state that if we love Jesus we will obey Him.

- Romans 6:1-2 is clear that salvation is not a license to sin. Genuine salvation leads people to turn from sin and live a life of obedience to Christ.
10. **“Isn’t the Christian experience merely psychological?”** (Psalm 51:10; Paul’s conversion – Acts 9)
- Many people suggest that we are conditioned from childhood, but having met many Christians, we know that preconditioning can’t explain every conversion.
 - Suppose that a man walks into a room with a fried egg hanging from one ear. He exclaims, “Man, this fried egg is the greatest! I get peace, joy, satisfaction, and real purpose in life from this egg.” Although it is tough to argue with someone’s experience we can still ask several crucial questions. How do you know that it’s the fried egg and not auto-hypnosis? Who else has had a similar experience with the egg? What objective fact is producing this subjective experience?
 - A Christian’s subjective experience is tied to an objective historical fact – the resurrection of Christ.

10. **“I don’t believe in Hell.”**

- Our believing or not believing in Hell doesn’t make it one degree cooler. God tells us in the Bible that Hell is a reality (Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

11. **“I can’t believe in a God who would send people to hell.”**

- Hell was originally created for Satan and his angels. In the future it will contain those who join Satan in rejecting God. If you reject God’s provision for the forgiveness of your sins then you will join the Devil who rejected God from the beginning. Is that what you want?
- Could you believe in a God who would become a human, suffer at the hands of humans, and be killed by them, all so that His death could be the payment for their sins? That is extremely loving. God is saving people who deserve to go to hell -- and we all deserve that. Remember that the same God that sends people to hell also died for them. If they reject what God has provided then what is God left to do? He would have to judge them.
- Whether you believe in something or not does not change the fact of its existence. Jesus spoke often of hell (Matt. 25:41-46; Mark 9:47-48; Luke 16:19-31) and warned us so we would not go there. Would you say Jesus didn’t know what He was talking about?
- Are you implying that it is unjust for God to send people to hell? If so, then you accuse God of injustice. Sin is wrong and it must be punished. What would you have God do to those who oppose Him and do evil? Do you want Him to ignore that which is wrong? Do you want Him to turn His head and not be holy and righteous?

12. **“I don’t want to be in heaven if my husband (wife, family, and friends) won’t be there.”**

- The rich man in Luke 16:27-28 who died went to Hades was very concerned about his brothers headed the same way. He pleaded for someone to warn them. Those who have died now understand the truth. They don’t want their loved ones to join them in Hell. If you are not a Christian and your loved one has died apart from Christ, they would want you to accept Christ now and avoid Hell at any cost. If your loved one is still living then accept Christ now and you may help point them to Christ.