***Is Christianity Rational? - CA-019***

One of the most outstanding Christian apologists of all times was a man named Paul Little. He was killed in a car wreck back in the early 1970s. In the 1960s, he wrote a book called Know Why You Believe, which has become a classic in Christian apologetics. Paul Little said that when he first received his assignment working with Campus Crusade, he was petrified because he thought of himself as an evangelist. His first assignment was to go have dinner at a fraternity house in a state university, and give them an apologetical speech and answer questions. He was petrified because, first of all, it wasn't just any dormitory. It was an honors dormitory. This is where the really bright kids lived. Secondly, all the students who lived in that dormitory were Jewish.

So here he was. He had never thought of himself as an apologist. He was going to witness to a dormitory full of Jewish honors college students. So he said that he was petrified with fear, but he went through with it. He said he was amazed at how easy it was. The questions that were asked him were easily answered from a biblical framework. One young man accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Each time that Paul Little repeated this, he found that it was easier than he had expected.

He boiled it down to 12 questions. He said, "If you can answer these 12 questions, you're a qualified Christian apologist."

**Is Christianity Rational?**

The first question is, is Christianity rational? People always ask this question: "Does it really make sense? Is Christianity logically consistent?" To answer this question, let's go back to our mandate for Christian apologetics. That's 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to anyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. Sanctify Christ as Lord" (make sure that you're in fellowship). Make sure that the Lord Jesus Christ is sitting on that throne in the center of your life. The word "sanctify" means "to set aside." So that seat, the throne room of your life, should be reserved or set aside for the Lord Jesus Christ. "Then always be ready to make a defense (an "apologia") that would stand up in court to everyone who asks you to give an account."

The word "account" is the Greek word "logos" which means "a word" or "a reason." It's the same word that we get the English word "logic" from. So what he's saying is to be ready to give a logically consistent, rational defense – something that would stand up in a court of law, for the hope that is in you. Yet, of course, don't do it arrogantly. A lot of Christians need to consider that. But with gentleness and with reverence.

We're commanded to be able to give a logically consistent, rational defense of Christianity. Who is this written to? Who is the apostle Paul writing to? Seminary professors? No, not necessarily. I'm sure seminary professors are included, but not even seminary graduates.

Peter 1:1 says, "This is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Here's who it's addressed to: "To those who reside as aliens." In particular, to the believers who were, "Scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." This was in the first century, specifically to them. It is also addressed to those "Who are chosen" – those who are the elect. Are you among the elect? If you're a believer, then you are elect. So guess who is supposed to be a Christian apologist? If you are elect, if you're a born again believer, then this command is to you. You don't have to have a seminary degree. You don't have to know a lot of big words. There are only two requirements. One is, of course, that you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Christianity is rational. It does make sense. All religions of the world answer some of the questions that people are asking – the big questions, and all religions claim to be able to answer these questions. But there comes a point where whatever religion; whatever philosophy; or, whatever world view it is, it just has to say, "I don't have the answer for this." Christianity reaches that point. We have to say, "We don't know. We can answer some of these questions." But the point at which Christianity says, "We don't know the answer to this," is way beyond the point that the other world views in the other religions have to say, if they're honest, "We don't have the answer."

This is even covered in the Bible. Deuteronomy 29:29 reminds us that the secret things belong to the Lord our God. There are some things that only God knows, and He hasn't chosen to reveal them to us. We don't need to worry about those things. Don't try to figure them out. But here's what you really need to focus on: "The things that are revealed belong to us and our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this Law." So don't worry about the things that God hasn't revealed. They belong to Him. Focus on the things that are revealed, because that's what He has revealed to us and our children so that we can apply them.

So Christianity makes perfect sense. It's very logical and very rational. We have to say, at some point, we just don't know some of these answers. They're not revealed in the Word of God. But what we do know makes sense. There are other things in Christianity that may not make perfect sense to us. It's not that they are illogical, but it's that they go beyond logic. How can God be three, yet, be one? How can the doctrine of election be true, and yet God holds us accountable to believe ourselves? A lot of these things we can find some hints at the answers to. Others we just have to say, "We don't know. This belongs to God, and He hasn't chosen to reveal them." But we can answer a vast number of questions logically, rationally, and consistently. The first requirement is being in fellowship as per 1 Peter 3:15: "Sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord in your lives," and as per 1 John 1:9.

So the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts people. He uses us to convey the information, but ultimately, God the Holy Spirit is the Christian apologist. Some people take this principle, and they will say, "You shouldn't study apologetics, because you should just depend on God the Holy Spirit to give you the answer at the right time. They base this on Matthew 10:19, where Jesus says, speaking to the apostles (the disciples), "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say, for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speaks, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

There are a couple of parallel passages. Let's go ahead and look at those. Mark 13:11: "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour. For it is not you who speaks, but it is the Holy Spirit."

Luke 21:14: "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves. For I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponent opponents will be able to resist or to refute."

First of all, He was speaking to the apostles. He was speaking to first century Jews. There is a question whether this would even be applicable to us. It was to the Jewish people; to the apostles; and, possibly to Jewish peoples in the tribulation who will be arrested and brought to trial. But firstly, there is a big doubt as to whether it is really applicable to us. And secondly, He says, "When they arrest you and bring you up before the synagogues." Have any of you ever been arrested and brought before the synagogues? So that's another doubt. Thirdly, He focused on "Don't be anxious. Don't worry about it." That's good advice for us today. Don't worry about it.

But He says to allow the words of the Holy Spirit to be given you. Here's the part that's applicable to us today. The Holy Spirit does not work independently from the Word. So if you want the Holy Spirit to be working in your life to make you a better Christian apologist, that means you have to take in the Word of God. You have to provide the building blocks for Him to work with. That is the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Of course, that includes the work that all Christians are called to do as an apologist.

So it all boils down to temporal fellowship and having the Word of God and biblical principles in us so that God the Holy Spirit is free to use Scripture in our minds, and enlighten our minds, so that we're able to pass this on to other people.

**Psalms**

So now we're going to look at some Scriptures that are very appropriate for us to learn and to meditate on, because they have instructions on Christian apologetics. Let's go back to the Old Testament and begin in Psalms 10:4. These are important mental attitudes to remember when we are dealing with unbelievers, and even sometimes with born again people who are bringing up objections and doubts. Psalm 10:4: "The wicked in the haughtiness of his countenance does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, 'There is no God.'"

So many times people are looking for loopholes. They're bringing up objections which are not valid from a point of carnality. They're not truly seeking the truth. They're not truly seeking God. They're hoping to be able to tell themselves, "There is no God. I can do whatever I want to do." Sometimes their objections are not sincere. They're nothing but smokescreens for a wicked lifestyle. We need to remember that. We need to deliver the truth to them. If they reject it, as they have the right to do in their personal priesthood, it is their responsibility before the Lord to receive the truth.

Psalm 92:5-6: "How great are Your works, Lord? Your thoughts are very deep. A senseless man has no knowledge, nor does a stupid man understand this." People who are without the enlightenment of God the Holy Spirit are spiritually senseless and spiritually stupid. We need to remember this. Sometimes they don't have the slightest idea of what we're saying. Even though we are delivering spiritual truth to them, they have no way of receiving it. It makes absolutely no sense to them. The best we can do is plant a seed, and at the correct time, perhaps God the Holy Spirit will bring it to fruition.

Psalm 141:3 is something good for Christians to remember, especially when dealing with unbelievers: "Set a guard, O, Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips." Be careful with what you say. Make sure you're under the control of the Holy Spirit. It is so easy, when you're talking about cherished beliefs (things that you're totally sold out to) to become emotional, and lose fellowship, and say things that will be very harmful. So it's good to remember to ask God to set a guard over your mouth.

**Proverbs**

Every believer should just saturate his mind with the book of Proverbs. There are some very good principles for apologetics in Proverbs. Let's look at as many as we have time for. Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." If your starting point is the fear of the Lord, then you're beginning to get a little bit of knowledge. You can instruct other people in this, and you can bring them to a point of deep respect, reverence, and yes, even fear of the Lord. If God were to appear in this building tonight, we'd be scared to death. And we're believers. If we can just communicate what a magnificent being the Lord God is to unbelievers, and guide their minds to having a healthy fear of the Lord, we've set them on the right track.

Proverbs 1:20: "Wisdom (divine viewpoint, we might say) shouts in the streets. She lifts her voice in the square. At the head of the noisy streets, she cries out. At the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings. How long, O, naive ones, will you love being simple-minded, and scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, and fools hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit on you. I will make my words known to you, because I called and you refused. I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention. You neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof. I will also laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your dread comes; when your dread comes like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they (the fools) will call on Me, but I will not answer. They will seek Me diligently, but they will not find Me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept My counsel. They spurned all my reproof, so they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them."

Incidentally, the word for "fool" in verse 32 is a word that means close-minded. "The complacency of close-minded fools will destroy them, but he who listens to Me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil." These are solemn warnings that when you offer someone the truth about God and about spiritual matters, they really need to listen.

Proverbs 5:22: "His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly, he will go astray." People who choose to be negative to the Word of God, and to throw up these objections and devices – these very objections that they create can very well bind them like cords and blind them to the truth. So this is another very serious warning.

Proverbs 8:32: "Now, therefore, O, sons, listen to Me, for blessed are they who keep My ways. Heed instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at My door posts, for he who finds Me (divine viewpoint wisdom) finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me injures himself. All those who hate me love death.

Proverbs 10:8: "The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined." If you're really wise, show it by being positive to the truth revealed in the Word of God.

Proverbs 10:11: "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence." If you're a righteous person and if you have the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you're called upon to be a fountain of life to a world that needs truth and life.

Proverbs 10:14: "Wise men store up knowledge, but with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand."

Proverbs 12:13: "An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will escape from trouble." Don't worry about people backing you against the wall and making you look foolish, if you're acting as a Christian apologist. The righteous will escape from trouble. It is the evil man who will be ensnared by the transgression of his lips.

Proverbs 14:3: "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will protect them."

Proverbs 14:5: "A trustworthy witness will not lie, but a false witness utters lies. A scoffer seeks wisdom and finds none. But knowledge is easy to the one who has understanding." If you're truly seeking the truth, you can find it. It is available. It's not hidden. It's only the scoffer who can never understand the truth.

Proverbs 17:27-28: "He who restrains his words has knowledge." We're all tempted to talk too much. So maybe it's a good idea when you're talking to someone to just not say too much. Say just enough, and then stop until they ask more. "He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he has a cool spirit" – do you get hot under the collar when you are talking to people about Christianity? It's easy to do, but you need to remember that you're not making any friends for the Lord when you lose your temper. "He who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise. When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent." So it's usually better to say too little than to say more than you should and then wish you could retract some of your words.

Proverbs 18:2: "A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind." When you're sitting there talking to a fool, trying to explain something to him, he's not listening. He's thinking of what he's going to say next so that he can reveal his own opinions. Don't put yourself in that position.

Proverbs 18:3: "When a wicked man comes, contempt also comes, and with dishonor comes scorn. The words of a man's mouth are deep waters. The fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook."

Proverbs 18:12: "Before destruction, the heart of a man is haughty." If you do want to be made to look like a fool, just get proud. Just be proud of how much you know and what a good debater you are. God seems to take delight in humbling people – believers who get proud of all that they know.

Proverbs 18:13: "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him." You earn the right to be heard by listening. If you listen to someone, sometimes you can say, "Well, I listened to you. Now it's your turn to listen to me." That's how you earn the right to be listened to.

Proverbs 19:5: "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will not escape."

Proverbs 21:22: "A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust." If you've got a mind filled with the Word of God, and you're under the control of the Holy Spirit, it's what you're going to be able to do. You're going to be able, and you're going to sit back and you're going to say, "Wow, did I do that? I didn't know I was that smart. I'm not that smart." You've got to recognize that it was the Holy Spirit who took your words. It's just like a stealth bomber who flew behind the enemy lines and destroyed a stronghold.

Proverbs 21:23: "He who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from trouble." Again, it's usually better to say too little than to say too much.

Proverbs 26:12: "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." You might want to quote this to someone who really thinks he's got all the answers and dismisses whatever you say. You might even want to remind yourself of it.

Proverbs 28:5: "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand all things." A person is seeking the truth, and they are really seeking whether there is a God, and if there is, can I have a relationship with him? It's not because they're a good person. It's because the Holy Spirit is leading them in that direction. If He's giving them those questions, He's going to supply the answers and the understanding for them to be able to understand and to act on the answers.

Proverbs 28:9: "He who turns away his ear from listening to the Law (or the Word of God), even his prayer is an abomination." It is a really serious matter when someone says, "I don't want to hear any of that Bible stuff." They're turning their ear away from hearing the Law, and even their prayer can become an abomination.

Proverbs 29:5: "A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps." So watch it. When someone says, "Wow, you sure are smart. I've never had anybody able to answer these questions for me. You really know your stuff." Watch it. They could be spreading a net that could be a trap.

**The New Testament**

Let's go over to the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 10:5: "We are destroying strongholds. We're bringing every thought captive to the Lord Jesus Christ." We've got to do that in our own minds before we can be Christian apologists and do it for other people – destroying the strongholds of Satan in our minds.

So the only two requirements you need to be a Christian apologist and to fulfill the command 1 Peter 3:15 is, first of all, the filling of the Spirit. Secondly, a mind full of the Word of God. When you have those two things, you can destroy Satan's strongholds. You can be used of God to destroy Satan's strongholds in the minds of both believers and unbelievers.

**Relativism**

Let me give you some examples here. Relativism is the big catch word today. It's all relative. Have you ever had somebody say that to you? "It's all relative." What they're saying is (listen very closely or you'll miss it): "Nothing is the absolute truth. Anything anybody could ever say is relative truth, and I am absolutely certain of that." What they're saying is that there is at least one truth that is not relative. That's their statement that everything else is relative. Use that against them. Show them (gently) how inconsistent that is to say that everything is relative. That is an absolute statement. Everything is relative. You're saying that there's no such thing as absolute truth, and I'm absolutely sure about that.

If everything is relative (you might remind them) then the statement that you just made that everything is relative is a relative statement, and I'm not obligated to believe it. It's just as though you said, "I prefer vanilla over chocolate. It tastes better to me. So why should I give your statement any more weight than I would my statement that there is such a thing as absolute truth." You know what? You may make a relativist angry. If you do, you might very gently ask, "Well, why are you angry? If everything is relative, then nothing is worth getting angry about.

What about the statement, "Well, all cultures have their own beliefs, and they're all relative to one another." Well, you just made an absolute statement. Every statement is relative except the one that you just made – that all cultures have their own belief. You're saying there's something absolute, and you just said it.

What about the one: "Well, that's just your interpretation. What makes your interpretation better than anyone else's?" You can reply, "That's a good question. You can always say, well, obviously you don't like my interpretation. You have an interpretation of your own which you prefer over mine. Would you mind telling me why you prefer your interpretation?" Usually they can't tell you anything. They just don't like the sound of it. You can always say, "Well, I have good reasons for this interpretation that I hold, which I will be happy to share with you. Will you share with me your reasons for preferring your interpretation?" Whatever statement they said, turn it and apply it to them, instead of what so many Christians do which is turn tail and run. Just take the statement that they made and apply it to their beliefs.

Someone may say, "Well, that's just your interpretation?" What about saying, "Well, that statement that you just made that this is just my interpretation – you know what? That's your interpretation. That's your interpretation of my interpretation. Why is your interpretation any better than mine? Why do you prefer yours?" Now, this gets a little strange. You're going around in circles. You think you may be a little bit confused, but when you turn this on someone who tries to use it on you, you're messing up their minds, and maybe they're going to examine the things that they believe and say, "Well, you know, maybe these are inconsistent. Maybe there is something to this Christianity. It seems rational. Maybe I'd better look into it."

What about the one that says, "There's no such thing as facts. There is just interpretation. There is no such thing as truth. There are just people's interpretations. There are just people's belief." Do you know what you can say to that? "So there are no such things as facts – just interpretation. Wow, is that a fact? Are you telling me it's a fact that there are no such thing as facts? But you know what? You're telling me that there are no facts – there are just interpretations. I think that's just your interpretation of a fact – that there are facts, and you're misinterpreting it." Always do that with gentleness, and you may get them to thinking.

What about the one that says, "There's no such thing as absolute truth. We just create our own reality." Well, obviously there are some things that we have choices on. By believing certain things and taking responsibility for certain things, we can have a much better life. There's nobody in the world who won't teach this to their kids. I mean, the most blatant relativist might say, "There's no such thing as absolute truth or no such thing as objective reality. We create our own reality." You better be sure he's going to teach his kids, "You better study hard. You better make the decision to study hard, and go to college, and learn so that you can have a nice house with a lot of toys and cars and vehicles and boats." He's going to teach his kids that there is such a thing as reality, and you better conform to it. Even the most blatant relativist will sometimes say, "Come on, let's get real." You've heard them say it. Remind them of the inconsistency of saying that there is no such thing as absolute truth, or that we create our own reality, when, obviously, they do believe in objective reality and objective truth. They're just selective about where they go with it. They're very careful not to go in their area of spirituality, and that lets you know that it's a smoke screen.

What about the one: "Well, that may be true for you, but it's not true for me. If it's true for you, then believe it and use it, but it's not true for me." Okay, if someone says truth is relative – it may be true for you, but not for me, then what they're saying is, "What I just said is true for both of us." If it's true for you, but not for me, and I'm saying so, then that's the truth that applies to you and me both. So there's something that the person just said that they believe is true for at least two people, and however many more. So you've made a step in showing them that no matter what you have said, you believe that there are some truths that are true for more than one person. What you just said you believe is true for you and me both.

What about the one: "Question authority. Challenge authority." You're not supposed to believe anything because somebody tells you or because it's in the Bible. You're to question it. There's probably some validity in this. The Bible says to prove all things; hold fast to that which is good. But when you've shown that the Bible is the truth of the Word of God and people say, "Well, you're supposed to question authority," say, "Okay, I'm questioning whether you should question authority or not. You just told me to question authority, so I'm questioning that statement. It sounds like an authoritative statement: 'Question authority.' I'm questioning it. I'm challenging it. I believe there are some things that you shouldn't question. There are some authorities that you shouldn't question." So turn it around. Whatever statement they've said, instead of letting them use it against Christianity, turn it around and use it on the belief that they just said.

After you do this, don't think that the person is automatically going to come to Christ. I have heard of people, when you have done a good job, you've been under the control of the Holy Spirit, and you've destroyed these strongholds and they're sitting there and saying, "I cannot challenge anything you've said. It all makes perfect sense." You may say, "Well, are you ready to trust in Christ now?" Don't be surprised if they say something like, "No, I'm not." If you ask them why, and they're honest, they'll probably say something like, "It would really mess up my way of living."

So people understand this and that's why they create these smoke screens. Every once in a while, you'll have someone with a sincere question (a sincere objection); you deal with it; and, they believe in Christ. Others reveal that it's only a loophole they're looking for – a smoke screen. The best you can do is to be used to plant some seeds, and hopefully (Who knows?) they'll remember what you told them.

**Sophistry**

Watch out for the people who just want to debate. You know, there's a word called "sophistry," and that means just winning arguments by any kind of trick. There is no regard for the truth. There are a lot of people out there like that. When you sense that, bring it to the surface: "Are you playing games with me, or are you sincerely wanting to know the truth? If you want to know the truth, I can help you. God sent me here to help you – to lead you to the truth. If you're just wanting to play games, I'm not interested. Find someone else to play games." Remember that you're dealing with a human being created in the image of God. Always do this with reverence and respect for the Creator. Always remember that our goal as Christian apologists is not winning arguments, but bringing people to Christ.

Leon Adkins, 2003

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