

**Evangelism  
and  
Apologetics**

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION

We often busy ourselves with what we might call “real life.” We are busy working, going to school, raising children, taking care of grandchildren, cooking meals, doing errands, or cleaning homes and ourselves. We worry about money, relationships, to-do lists, grades, and many other things. We don’t often stop to consider that beyond this “real life,” there is something greater. Even Christians often get caught up in the business of this life, forgetting that there is another life and a spiritual reality that we cannot now see. We forget that our lives have eternal value and that our choices have eternal consequences. We often forget that every human being is an eternal soul, one that will be with God for eternity in paradise, or one that will be in hell forever.

This is the reality. It seems harsh, but it is true, and there is no other way to put it. The best way to remember this reality is to continually read the Bible. There, in God’s word, we find numerous reminders that there are two types of people. There are those who believe in the God of the Bible and those who don’t. People are either children of the serpent (Gen. 3:15; John 8:29-47; 1 John 3:8-10) or children of God (John 1:12-13; Gal. 3:26; 1 John 5:1). There are many different ways of saying this. There are those who are children of Abraham, the father of faith (Rom. 4:1-12; Gal. 3:7, 29), and those who are not (see Matt. 3:9; John 8:39-47). In short, there are those going to heaven and those going to hell.

This reality is made very clear in Jesus’ teaching. He taught on the reality of heaven and hell more than anyone did. For example, read what Jesus teaches at the end of the Sermon on the Mount about the two gates (Matt. 7:12-14), the two trees (Matt. 7:15-20), and the two types of houses (Matt. 7:24-27). Consider the parable of the weeds (Matt. 13:24-30), the parable of the net (Matt. 13:47-50), and the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

We can also look at the book of Revelation. At the end of time, when Jesus returns, there will be two types of harvests: the harvest of the saints (Rev. 14:14-16) and the harvest of the damned (Rev. 14:17-20). There will be those who enter into the new creation to worship God forever (Rev. 21-22), and those who face eternal torment, a “second death” (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8).

I don’t write these things to be emotionally manipulative or to make anyone feel guilty. I am simply reporting the truth.

## A SPIRITUAL BATTLE

We often forget that we are in the middle of a battle. Satan has been warring against God since the Garden of Eden. It is a battle of good and evil, of truth against lies. It is a battle for God’s glory, and, as in all battles, lives are saved or lost. The book of Revelation is a truly fascinating book. Unfortunately, it is often misinterpreted and misunderstood. (It’s not *easy* to

understand, but with some careful study of the text in its biblical and historical context, it can be understood.) This book pulls back the curtains of the spiritual battle that is usually invisible to us. In chapter 12, we see Satan raging against God. He attacks God and his people. He even tries to destroy Jesus. But he is defeated, at least partially. We read these stunning words in Revelation 12:10-12:

<sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. <sup>11</sup> And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

Satan’s defeat is assured. In John 12:31, Jesus, looking forward to the time when he will be “glorified,” or crucified and resurrected, says, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” Jesus has bound the strong man (Matt. 12:29). Satan has fallen like lightning (Luke 10:18). Though he is still active in the world, his power is limited. Therefore, he rages and pursues the people of God. He is prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking to devour anyone he can (1 Pet. 5:8).

Our job is to resist Satan (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9). How do we resist Satan? How do we conquer him? Look at Revelation 12:11. We conquer Satan by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb, and through the word of our testimony. And we are not afraid, because even death cannot destroy us. Our victory has been won by Jesus’ sacrificial death. Any victory we have as Christians is based on Jesus’ finished work on the cross. But we also defeat Satan through “the word of [our] testimony.” This does not mean sharing our personal testimony. It means the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We don’t defeat the powers of evil in this world through political clout or military might. We don’t defeat evil by using evil schemes. We defeat evil by trusting in Jesus and sharing his gospel fearlessly. We must proclaim the gospel message to the world. The gospel will not be spread by our church attendance, our moral and ethical behavior, or even our love. Proclamation of the gospel is necessary.

Commenting on Revelation 12, New Testament theologian D. A. Carson writes, “There is no other way for the gospel to advance. You cannot see people converted by holding the sword to their throat. You cannot transform society by anything other than the proclamation of the gospel. What we *must* have is the promulgation and promotion of the gospel. Yet some of us have not shared the gospel with a single person in the last year or even five years.”<sup>1</sup> As if that

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 105.

were not convicting enough, he adds, “Thus, the only way that we can be defeated on this dimension is to be quiet. Our silence guarantees a measure of victory to Satan.”<sup>2</sup>

Let’s consider two other passages of Scripture before we move on. When Paul addresses the Corinthian church, he is concerned about their spiritual health. He is also concerned about some other preachers, the so-called “super-apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11). Although he was away from the church when he was writing, he was ready to return to them to assert his authority and to correct any disobedience in the church. This is part of what he writes to them:

<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

<sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

<sup>6</sup> being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Paul knew that Christians don’t fight battles like the rest of the world. We don’t use traditional weapons. We don’t trade insult for insult. Christians use weapons that have “divine power to destroy strongholds.” What does that mean?

For an answer, let’s look at something else that Paul wrote. In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul writes about the way we are able to “stand against the schemes of the devil” (v. 11). We do this by being armed. Then Paul uses an extended metaphor about armor. We put on such things as the “belt of truth,” “the breastplate of righteousness,” gospel shoes (so to speak), “the shield of faith,” and “the helmet of salvation” (vv. 14-17). These are all pieces of defensive equipment. In other words, we are to put on Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14), who is truth, our righteousness, our salvation, and so on. What is the one offensive weapon? We are to take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication” (vv. 17-18). We are on the offense when we yield the word of God, particularly the gospel message, and we pray that the Spirit would use it skillfully.

The Bible also says, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and or marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). I am convinced that if we are to do God’s work, if we are to bring him maximum glory, and if we are to push back the forces of Satan, we must share the gospel and we must use God’s word to do it.

## **TRUTH UNDER ATTACK**

After Jesus was arrested, when he was on trial, he was brought to Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect, or governor, of Judea. Pilate asked Jesus if he was a king. Jesus replied, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate responded with an odd question, one that John doesn’t comment on: “What is truth?” (John 18:37-38).

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 106.

Pilate was obviously confused. He didn't understand that Jesus was not only the one who witnessed to truth, but he *is* truth (John 14:6). Because he didn't have faith, he didn't understand. The situation is the same today.

People are still confused about the truth. This is probably how it has always been, but it seems that now more than ever, truth is under attack.

Where is truth? If you've spent any time watching TV, listening to politicians, reading the newspaper, surfing the Internet, or in the halls of schools, you know that truth is in short supply. People seem to avoid the truth in all kinds of ways. Most people deny truths, particularly ones related to God. Others say that all truth is relative ("you have your truth and I have mine"), and there is no way to know absolute truth.

Though these trends are disturbing, they shouldn't surprise us. Jesus called Satan "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Satan has been lying from the beginning. He lied in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-5), twisting God's words and tempting Eve. He lied to Jesus, promising Jesus that he (Jesus) could have all the kingdoms of the world if he worshiped him (Satan; see Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-12). He was suggesting that Jesus could be King without the cross. When Peter did the same thing, Jesus responded, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (Matt. 16:22-23).

Whenever people fail to set their minds on God, they exchange the truth for a lie. Paul discusses this issue in Romans 1:18-25. Though everyone knows something about God from observing creation, in our natural state we have suppressed the truth, thus becoming fools who worship the created things instead of the Creator. Only God, using his word and the Spirit that authored it, can illuminate our darkened minds to see truth.

As stated earlier, we give Satan a measure of victory when we remain silent. If we do not share the truth about God and his universe to the world, Satan will fill the gap with lies. It has always been this way. We must prepare ourselves to do battle by using God's word prayerfully and in the Spirit, with full conviction, but also with love and compassion.

## **EQUIPPING THE SAINTS**

I know that this introduction has been long and theological. I'm glad you're still reading and ready to learn. We must see our role as evangelists, as ambassadors for Christ, and as royal priests in light of the big picture of the Bible. God has chosen to use his children to proclaim truth in this world, to witness to his glory, to persuade people to repent and believe in Jesus, and to make disciples.

We all know that we should be evangelizing, but we often feel bad about it. We don't feel well prepared to speak to others about God, and when we have an opportunity, we are often frightened or overwhelmed. When we manage to share some bits of gospel truth to people, we don't feel like we've done a good job, and we often can't answer the many objections and questions that come back to us. When we don't say anything at all, we feel guilty.

The purpose of this material is to help us become equipped to evangelize. The goal is to give us information that will prepare us to share the gospel in different situations. While we may still fumble through evangelism, the more we think about it and prepare for it—and the more we pray about it—the more likely we are to share the gospel, share it faithfully, and share it persuasively.

In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul writes about the gifts that Jesus has given the church. “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” As a pastor and a teacher, it is my role to equip the saints of our church for ministry. Each one of us has a role in ministry. And while there are some people who are particularly gifted to be evangelists (as this passage indicates), all of us have a role to play in evangelism. It is not enough for me to say, “Go tell it on the mountain!” You have to know what to say and how to say it. This material will help you with that.

We will be studying both evangelism and apologetics. Evangelism is simply the sharing of the gospel. Apologetics can be defined as the reasoned argument (or defense) of the Christian faith. Apologetics can be defensive (asking questions), but it can also be offensive (providing reasons and evidences for Christianity). Since we are often met with objections when we share the gospel, it seems natural to study how to answer those questions.

This material is not intended to be a one-size-fits-all, paint-by-the-numbers approach. (Hopefully, it won’t be a mix-your-metaphors approach, either.) This material is intended to get us to think about these issues. I believe that preparing our minds is a helpful prelude to action. But reading and thinking cannot replace praying and doing. We must be in constant prayer, we must be obedient to God, and we must love both him and our neighbors so much that we are willing to proclaim the gospel.

## **PREPARING YOUR MINDS FOR ACTION**

One more word before we begin: some of us are a bit reluctant to learn. This is understandable. For some of us, it’s been a long time since we’ve been in school. Some of us read slowly. We are not all equally fit to read, to study, and to speak. That’s okay. I believe that God will honor your efforts. But try we must. I suppose you could say that it is one of the devil’s lies that we can’t learn. Christians should continually grow in many ways. Our love should continue to grow. Our faith and purity should continue to grow. And our knowledge, our wisdom, and our ability to use our minds to love God should also continue to grow.

According to Jesus, the greatest commandment is this: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37).<sup>3</sup> We need to love God with our mind. The way that we love God is by keeping his commandments (1 John 5:3). As we will see, we are commanded to share the gospel. So, if we are to love God with our minds, we must prepare our minds to obey his command to evangelize. In a similar way, we can

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<sup>3</sup> Mark adds strength to the list, as does Luke (Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

obey the second greatest commandment—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39)—by sharing the gospel with our neighbor.

Paul tells us that we are supposed to offer our bodies in worship to God (Rom. 12:1). Part of the way we do that is by renewing our minds, and so being transformed (Rom. 12:2). We do this by digging into Scripture and by studying the truth. Peter, who has some important things to say about evangelism and apologetics, writes, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13). Paul tells Timothy, “Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Tim. 2:7).

Hopefully, you will agree that we must love and worship God with our minds. Sadly, there has been a tendency in evangelical Christianity not to use the mind. Instead of learning deeply and thinking deeply, many Christians are happy to learn a few simple things and repeat a few platitudes and clichés. I believe we must repent of such ways. Jesus told us to use *all* of our mind to love God. There is no excuse to be lazy in our thoughts, in our reading, and in our learning. If we don’t sharpen our minds to enter into this spiritual battle, and if we don’t sharpen the minds of our children, who will? If we want to influence this world, we must love God with everything we have: heart, soul, strength, and mind.