

“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.”

1 Peter 3:15

“But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts...”

C

- Commitment to Christ
- Confidence in the work of God
- Compassionate motives
- Confessing unloving attitudes
- Counting the cost (time and effort)
- Conflict with spiritual forces

“...always being ready...”

A

- Application of Scripture
- Ability to present the gospel
- Awareness of the basic objections
- Arsenal of answers
- Avoidance of misconceptions

“...to make a defense...”

R

- Recognition of major versus minor issues
- Reliance upon the work of the Holy Spirit
- Relating the message clearly

“...to every one who asks you...”

I

- Interest in specific people
- Impact of prayer (prayer list, open doors)
- Importance of asking questions and listening carefully

“...to give a account for the hope that is in you...”

N

- New quality of life
- Need for a prepared testimony

“...yet with gentleness and reverence.”

G

- Guarding against arguments
- Gentleness, patience, and love
- Gracious and respectful attitude
- Ground in common
- Growing relationships

**Biblical
Guide-
lines for
Defend-
ing the
Faith**

There are only three logical options for answering this question: (1) no (God does not exist), (2) maybe (God may exist), and (3) yes (God does exist).

1. God Does Not Exist

- a. A person would have to be omniscient to know that God does not exist.
- b. People do not live as though God does not exist. They behave as if there is meaning, value, and purpose in the world, but without God, there would be no real basis for these things.

2. God May Exist

- a. What kind of proof is necessary? Not 100 percent proof, but reasonable evidence. Cause and effect reasoning provides this evidence.
- b. The If Proposition: If anything now exists, something must be eternal, or else something not eternal must have emerged from nothing. Four alternatives:
 - (1) The universe is an illusion. This is a self-defeating position, and no one lives this way.
 - (2) The universe is eternal. Three reasons why this is not true:
 - (a) Evidence for a beginning (the big bang).
 - (b) Hydrogen is not used up.
 - (c) Irreversible decay.
 - (3) The universe emerged from nothing. But nothing produces nothing. No effect can exist without a cause.
 - (4) The universe was created by an eternal Being. The universe points beyond itself to an eternal and necessary Being.

3. God Does Exist

- a. Impersonal or personal? Two reasons why this eternal Being is personal:
 - (1) The complexity of the universe; design requires a designer.
 - (2) The nature of humans; thought, aesthetics, and morality cannot be the products of an impersonal creator.
- b. Only a personal God provides a basis for meaning, value, and purpose.
- c. The claims of Christ and the gospel.

1

Question

Does God Really Exist?

Three logical options: (1) miracles cannot occur, (2) Miracles may occur, and (3) miracles do occur.

1. Miracles Are Not Possible

- a. It is improper to define miracles out of existence.
- b. Science cannot prove or disprove the miraculous. Miracles do not violate the laws of nature, they supercede them.
- c. Miracles are unusual events that do not destroy the regularity of nature.
- d. The real issue is whether God exists; if so, miracles are possible.

2. Miracles Are Possible But May Not Have Occurred

- a. History, not philosophy or science, must settle the question of whether miracles have occurred.
- b. The historical reliability of the Bible is established (see question four), and the Bible records a number of miracles.
- c. Focus on the miracles of Christ. These were accomplished before hostile as well as sympathetic eyewitnesses.
- d. The resurrection is the crucial miracle.
 - (1) Historical facts before and after the resurrection.
 - (2) The tomb:
 - (a) Occupied
 - (b) Empty
 - (3) The post-resurrection appearances.
 - (4) Circumstantial evidence.
 - (5) The verdict.

3. Miracles Have Occurred

- a. Miracles do not create faith, they support faith.
- b. One must respond to the claims and credentials of Christ.

2

Question

**Why
Believe In
Miracles?**

Christianity is either (1) based on subjective feelings and wishes, not objective facts, or (2) based on objective facts, not subjective feelings and wishes.

1. Christianity Is Subjective

- a. Religion can be a crutch, and Christianity is often caricatured as a psychological mechanism.
- b. Three psychological objections to Christianity:
 - (1) Preconditioning. But many Christians were not raised in Christian environments, and preconditioning does not make a position true or false.
 - (2) Belief and emotions do not determine truth. But Christianity appeals to the historical person and work of Christ, not subjective belief and emotions.
 - (3) Experience does not determine truth. But the truth of Christianity is not demonstrated by subjective experience. Experience can only play a supporting role.
- c. The psychological argument cuts both ways; there are psychological reasons for believing in atheism as well as theism.
- d. All people seek meaning and purpose in life, but faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed.

2. Christianity is Objective

- a. There is an objective historical basis for Christianity, and this is found in the resurrected Christ.
- b. All people have a real need for Christ's gift of salvation even though many do not feel this need. Christianity offers a cure for our condition, not a psychological crutch.
- c. Christianity is not true because it works; it works because it is true.

3

Question

**Isn't
Christi-
anity
Just A
Psycho-
logical
Crutch?**

There are three responses to this question: (1) the Bible is not reliable, (2) there are certain problems with the Bible, and (3) the Bible is reliable.

1. The Bible Is Not Trustworthy

- a. Second-and third-hand information about the Bible leads to false impressions.
- b. The Old Testament and New Testament documents pass three crucial tests:
 - (1) The bibliographic test.
 - (a) Manuscript quantity: there are over 14,000 New Testament manuscripts.
 - (b) Manuscript quality: Old Testament, excellent; New Testament, very good.
 - (c) Manuscript time span: Old Testament, helped by Dead Sea Scrolls; New Testament exceptionally short (about 100 years).
 - (2) The internal test. The books of the Bible largely claim to be primary eyewitness accounts.
 - (3) The external test. The Bible is externally verifiable because it is locked into history. Archaeological evidence consistently affirms the reliability of the Old Testament and New Testament accounts.
- a. The Bible is unique in its production, preservation, and proclamations, and it has changed history and changed lives more than any other book.

2. There Are Problems With The Bible

- a. The problem of inspiration. The divine inspiration of the Bible is supported by its own claims and by fulfilled prophecy (messianic and general).
- b. The problem of interpretation. This is solved by consistently applying certain principles, especially the Interpretation of every passage in the light of the immediate and broad context.
- c. The problem of science and the Bible. The Bible concentrates more on the who than on the how of creation. While it is not a scientific textbook, the Bible's statements on scientific matters have proven to be reliable.
- d. Ethical problems. The problem of evil is the subject of question five. Genocide occurred only in the case of the wicked Canaanites who were judged by God through the Israelites. The slavery permitted in Israel was far more humane than slavery as we understand it.

4

Question

Is The Bible Really Trustworthy?

- e. The problem of apparent errors. Careful examination of most apparent discrepancies shows that they can be harmonized. Other errors crept into the text through scribal mistakes, but these are of a minor nature.
- f. The problem of canonicity. Canonicity is determined by inspiration and recognized by councils. The books of the Old Testament were recognized by the fifth century B.C., and the few that were sometimes disputed were officially recognized in the first century A.D. After the books of the New Testament were gradually circulated and collected, they were all officially recognized by the fourth century A.D.

3. The Bible Is Trustworthy

- a. The claims and credentials of Christ.
- b. The gospel.

There are three alternatives to the problem of moral and natural evil: (1) evil exists and God does not, (2) God exists and evil does not, and (3) God exists and evil exists.

1. Evil Exists and God Doesn't

- a. Since God is all-good and all-powerful, He will and can destroy evil. Evil exists, but it will be destroyed.
- b. Regardless of the problem of evil, God exists (see question one).

2. God Exists and Evil Doesn't

- a. One would have to deny one's own senses and experiences to maintain this view. This is self-defeating.
- b. One would also have to deny scientific evidence for natural evil and historical evidence for moral evil.
- c. This also requires a denial of the clear testimony of Christ and the Bible.

3. God Exists and Evil Exists

There are three options here: (a) evil is greater than God, (b) God and evil are equal but opposite, and (c) God is greater than evil.

- a. Evil is greater than God (finitism).
 - (1) It is wrong to assume that since God has not yet defeated evil, He therefore cannot. God's timing is not human timing.
 - (2) There would be no hope of a solution to evil if God were finite.
 - (3) The Bible clearly teaches the omnipotence of God and His future defeat of evil.
- b. God and evil are equal but opposite (dualism).
 - (1) The idea of two absolute coequals in eternal opposition is logically absurd.
 - (2) Evil is a corruption and negation of good; it is a distortion of God's good creation, and it has not always existed.
 - (3) The Bible teaches that God is greater than evil and will defeat it.

5

Question

If God Is Good, Why do Evil and Suffering Exist?

c. God is greater than evil (theism).

(1) The problem of causation: why did God allow evil to occur at all?

(a) God is not responsible for evil and sin. Evil was introduced in the human race by the rebellious choice of responsible creatures.

(b) The Fall had temporal and eternal consequences: the curse upon the earth and the eternal separation of unredeemed people from God.

(c) Our only hope of overcoming these consequences is the substitutionary work of the sin-bearer Jesus Christ who bore our penalty.

(d) God's provision for our sins must be accepted or rejected; the choice is ours.

(2) The problem of cessation: if God can stop evil, why hasn't He?

(a) People want God to partially eliminate evil. If all evil were eradicated, who would be left?

(b) God promises to completely eliminate evil by defeating it forever.

5

Christianity is either broad or narrow. If it is narrow, it is either narrow and wrong or narrow and true.

1. Christianity Is Not Narrow

- a. This conflicts with the exclusive claims of Christ.
- b. This also conflicts with the testimony of the apostles.
- c. All alternatives apart from Christ reduce to hopeless systems of human effort.

2. Christianity Is Narrow and Wrong

- a. False assumption that sincerity makes something true.
- b. False assumption that belief makes something true.
- c. False assumption that exclusiveness makes something wrong.
- d. All religions differ from one another and hold exclusive views about God, humanity, and salvation. Either one is right and the rest are wrong, or they are all wrong; they cannot all be right.

3. Christianity Is Narrow and True

- a. Because of the unique claims and credentials of Christ, there are only three options concerning Him: He was a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. His character rules out the first two.
- b. The reliability of the Bible (question four) refutes a fourth option that He was a legend.
- c. All people including Jews and Gentiles are in need of a relationship with Christ to be reconciled to God.
- d. Since Christ is the only solution, it is not arrogant or condescending to share Him with others.

6

Question

**How Can
Christ Be
the Only
Way to
God?**

**God will either judge or not judge those who have not heard about Christ.
If He judges them, His judgment is either unfair or fair.**

1. God Will Not Judge Those Who Have Not Heard

- a. If so, Christian missions are a mistake (as is the Great Commission) because they put a burden of responsibility on those who were previously innocent.
- b. The Scriptures clearly teach that all people will stand before God in judgment. Sin is a universal human condition which leads to separation from a holy God.

2. God's Judgment of Those Who Have Not Heard Is Unfair

- a. The Bible teaches the righteousness of God and the fairness of His judgment. This judgment is based on the light people have, and He does not hold them accountable for what they do not know.
- b. Because of external revelation (nature) and internal revelation (an inner awareness of the existence of God), no one is completely ignorant of the one true God.
- c. Because of the universality of moral standards and the human conscience, no one is completely ignorant of the nature of sin.
- d. All people must respond to what knowledge they have about God and sin. Those who respond to the light they have received will receive more light; God will be found by those who seek Him.
- e. God is sovereign, and He knows every human heart. He is able to provide the news about His Son to all who want to know the truth.
- f. Salvation has always been by grace through faith, and the basis of salvation has always been the death of Christ, even before His earthly life.
- g. Some people (infants and the mentally deficient) are incapable of a response, but God will not hold them accountable for that about which they could not respond.

3. God's Judgment of Those Who Have Not Heard Is Fair

- a. While God does not hold people accountable for what they could not know, He does hold us accountable for the knowledge we have.
- b. Those who raise this question know the message about Christ and are accountable for their response.

7

Question

**Will God
Judge
Those
Who
Never
Heard
About
Christ?**

**Either hypocritical behavior among Christians invalidates
Christianity or it does not.**

1. Hypocrisy Invalidates Christianity

- a. Hypocrisy is a problem in the Christian church, but this does not mean that all Christians are hypocrites.
- b. There are various sources and forms of hypocrisy, but the essence of hypocrisy is the pretense of being what one is not. To become real believers, people must admit their sinfulness, not cover it up. This is the opposite of hypocrisy.
- c. Many people profess to be Christians, but profession does not mean possession.
- d. Christians do not claim to be perfect; there is a progression in the Christian life, not perfection.
- e. Not all sin is hypocrisy; while all Christians sin, not all Christians are hypocrites.
- f. Christ and the Bible clearly denounce hypocrisy.

2. Hypocrisy Does Not Invalidate Christianity

- a. Christianity stands or falls on the person of Christ, not the performance of Christians.
- b. Those who raise this question are actually in agreement with Christ on the issue of hypocrisy.
- c. No one should allow the poor performance of certain Christians to prevent them from coming to the perfect Christ.

8

Question

**If
Christi-
anity
Is True,
Why Are
There So
Many
Hypo-
Crites?**

Either people can achieve salvation by means of good works or they cannot.

1. Good Deeds Can Get Us to Heaven

Since people recognize they cannot achieve perfection in this life, they erect various systems based on degrees of goodness. There are four problems with such systems:

- a. They are arbitrary.
 - (1) Which standard should we follow? Why is one better than another?
 - (2) How well do we have to do? No one can perfectly live up even to an arbitrary human standard.
- b. They offer no assurance of salvation. People cannot be sure whether they achieve it until it is too late.
- c. They ask God to approve of evil. These systems require God to approve imperfect people.
- d. They contradict the Bible. The Bible clearly teaches that salvation is based on faith in Christ, not human merit.

2. Good Deeds Cannot Get Us to Heaven

- a. God's standard is nothing less than perfection.
- b. Christ and the Bible affirm the imperfection of our attitudes and actions.
- c. The penalty of this imperfection (sin) is death (separation from God). There are only two options:
 - (1) We pay this penalty ourselves.
 - (2) We accept Christ's payment on our behalf.
- d. Christ bore our judgment in full, and when we receive His gift of righteousness we become acceptable and perfect before God.
- e. Good works are not the means of salvation, they are the result of salvation.

9

Question

**Isn't a
Good
Moral
Life
Enough
to Get
into
Heaven?**

The issue here is whether salvation by grace through faith is too simple because it is free to us.

1. Salvation by Faith Is Too Easy

- a. Salvation cannot be earned by human effort (see question nine).
- b. It is not correct to say that nothing of value is ever free.
- c. Salvation as a free gift does not remove all incentive for righteous living.
- d. The Scriptures clearly teach that salvation is offered as a Gift.

2. Salvation by Faith Is Not Too Easy

- a. Achievement of salvation is not difficult for us-it's impossible.
- b. Free does not mean easy:
 - (1) The Father gave up His Son.
 - (2) The Son gave up His life.
 - (3) We must give up our pride.

10

Question

**Isn't Just
Believing
In Christ
Too
Easy?**

Two options: biblical belief is either intellectual acknowledgment or it is personal acceptance.

1. Intellectual Acknowledgment

- a. Even demons have this kind of belief, but it is not enough.
- b. There is a difference between believing about Christ and believing in Christ.
- c. Three levels of belief:
 - (1) Notitia – objective notice.
 - (2) Assensus – intellectual assent.
 - (3) Fiducia – personal faith.

2. Personal Acceptance

- a. Believe equals receive; by its nature, a gift must be received from the giver.
- b. A person can receive Christ in spite of doubts; it is a choice to trust Him.

11

Question

**What
Does it
Mean to
Believe?**

Either a Christian can be sure or cannot be sure of eternal life.

1. We Cannot Be Sure of Eternal Life

- a. Can't someone stop believing in Christ? The nature of faith: not just intellectual assent but a willful choice that the believer has already made.
- b. Can't some sins disqualify a believer? The nature of sin: if any sins can disqualify, all Christians would be disqualified.
- c. Don't believers have to maintain their salvation? The nature of works: salvation begins and continues by God's grace, not human works. Christ not only saves us but also sustains us.
- d. We must reason from God's Word rather than our feelings. Reason from God to us (our position), not us to God (our practice).

2. We Can Be Sure of Eternal Life

- a. The nature of God's gift: it cannot be earned, and it is not subject to future performance.
- b. The nature of eternal life: if lost it would be limited life, not eternal life; eternal life is unlimited.
- c. The New Testament clearly and repeatedly emphasizes that faith in Christ is the sole condition for salvation. The few difficult passages must be interpreted in light of the clear passages.
- d. If people are unsure, they can make sure by praying with a witness to receive Christ.

12

Question

**Can
People
Really Be
Sure Of
Their
Salvation?**