

The Defense Of The Gospel

Introduction. In Philippians 1:12-18, Paul is discussing what had occurred while he was in prison. Although confined, his spirit was unhindered -- no retreat, no surrender!

Paul's imprisonment motivated others to preach. Some preached out of selfish ambition; they saw Paul as a competitor. Some preached out of good will and love; they saw Paul as a faithful defender of the truth. He ultimately had no resentment and rejoiced in spread of gospel. He was set for the defense of truth, not for himself.

Giving a defense means to present evidence, to give answers and to respond to objections. When we have a discussion on a particular Bible topic with our friends or relatives, we are "debating" in a sense and are trying to determine the truth. In order to help us in this endeavor, we are going to investigate the defending of the gospel.

I. ***Why Is It Necessary To Defend The Gospel?***

- A. Because the devil declared war on truth of God's word (Matthew 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12). This goes all the way back to the beginning (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6). Adam and Eve departed from the truth which led to sin and broke their fellowship with God.
- B. Because we must defend God's word as true (Titus 1:10-14). We can know the truth about the Savior and salvation (1 John 5:10-12, 20) and it can set us free (John 8:31-32).
- C. Because we must stop the spread and effect of false doctrine (2 Peter 2:1-2).
- D. Because we must save souls (Romans 1:16-17; Jude 3). Error is from Satan and it will destroy souls (Matthew 15:13-14).

II. ***Who Is Responsible To Defend The Gospel?***

- A. Every Christian is responsible in accordance with their ability and opportunity.
- B. The Philippians provided financial and moral support (Philippians 1:7).
- C. Philip told and defended the gospel story (Acts 8:3-4).
- D. We have to give a defense in word and in deed (1 Peter 3:15-16).

III. ***What Weapons Do We Use To Defend The Gospel?***

- A. The spiritual weapons of God's word; they are sharper than any sword (Hebrews 4:12).
- B. It is a mighty power to defeat error and bring souls to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).
- C. We should have no deceit, only a clear presentation of truth (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

- D. We should not "debate" with strife, arrogance, personal animosity or bitter wrangling (2 Corinthians 12:20).

IV. **Debates In Bible Days**

- A. In John 8:12-58, Jesus debated with the Pharisees on bearing witness of Himself.
- B. In Matthew 22:23-33, Jesus debated with the Sadducees on the resurrection.
- C. In Luke 13:10-17, Jesus debated with the ruler of the synagogue on the Sabbath day's work.
- D. In Acts 15:1-21, Peter debated with the believing Pharisees on whether circumcision was required.

V. **Debates Today**

- A. Debate on the essentiality of baptism -- refute the error of denominations.
 - 1. The great commission teaches baptism (Mark 16:15-16).
 - 2. Would one believe Jesus on water in the new birth (John 3:16, 5)?
 - 3. Baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; cf. Matthew 26:28).
 - 4. We are saved by grace through faith when we are baptized, not before and without baptism (Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 19:5).
 - 5. We are not saved by faith alone (James 2:24).
- B. Debate on modern miracle claims -- refute the error of Pentecostals and charismatics.
 - 1. Miracles confirmed the word (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4).
 - 2. Miracles ended when the truth was fully revealed (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).
 - 3. Fake healers cannot fake all miracles (John 6:9-11; 11:39, 43).
- C. Debate on instrumental music -- refute the error of denominations and the Christian Church.
 - 1. Gopher wood excluded all other kinds of wood (Genesis 6:14).
 - 2. "Sing" excludes other kinds of music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).
 - 3. Figurative language does not determine our practice in the church (Revelation 5:8; cf. 1 Timothy 2:8).
- D. Debate on institutionalism -- refute the error of liberal brethren.
 - 1. Each congregation raised its own funds by the contributions of its members (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
 - 2. Each congregation supported evangelists to preach the gospel according to its ability as the Lord ordained (1 Corinthians 9:14; 2 Corinthians 11:8).
 - 3. Congregations provided for their own needy (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1-6).

4. Each congregation was edified through the strength supplied by its own members (1 Corinthians 12:22-27; 14:26; Ephesians 4:14-16).

Conclusion. The truth must be defended against competing, contrary claims. Discussing the scriptures with people allows us to listen to the other side with an open mind (Matthew 13:15), to preach the truth as we presently understand it (2 Timothy 4:2), to encourage study of the word of God (2 Timothy 2:15), to allow our position to be examined and tested (John 3:19-21) and to seek religious unity (Ephesians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 1:10; John 17:20-23). We are in a battle for souls and we must do our best to stand for truth.