

Set 2 - Lecture 5

(0:18 - 2:57)

Let's start out with a word of prayer. Lord, we offer up this time to you. We are dependent upon you.

We're dependent upon your spirit to give us life, spiritual life, to give us power, to give us clarity, illumination of your word. I pray that we might have this kind of clarity right now. I pray that the same spirit who inspired the word might speak through the word.

And I pray for your spirit's presence. You have said that you will send the Holy Spirit, if we ask, and we do ask right now for your spirit to be present with us and allow us to understand the truths that are being talked about here. We ask this in Christ's name.

Amen. In this session, we want to deal with the topic of apologetics in the ascension. Now, it may seem like a strange way to address it, but really what I want to deal with in this time is to give you a context for understanding apologetics in terms of the theology of the gospel, and to put it in its proper place.

And around this, I want to focus on the question of why is there so little power in the church today? Why is there so little penetrating power in taking the gospel out to the culture? What do we need in order to be able to do that? And I would suggest that an understanding of the ascension and its implications would be a great help, and I'll be developing that as we go. But part of the problem is the church today, as is similar to the church, say, in the 19th century, is often limited in its vision. Soren Kierkegaard, who lived in the 19th century, said it wasn't so much that the church was immoral, but that it lacked passion.

It lacked a decisive power to change the world around them. It was stuck in one of the stages along life's way, and he talked about those three stages as, first, the aesthetic, and then second, the ethical, and third, the religious. The first stage, the aesthetic stage, was where people were stuck in the stage of being a spectator, the aesthete.

(2:58 - 17:21)

Now I suppose it's a good thing to be able to be a spectator. If we go to a sports event, it's a good thing to go to a baseball game or a football game or a basketball game or a hockey game and be able to enjoy being there. Some people have the same experience, say, in a church where they go and they listen to a sermon, they sermon taste, or they listen and sing the hymns or listen to great music that's being done up front by the worship band.

And that's all a good thing, but it only takes you so far to be in the position of being a spectator. And being a spectator, you can be moved. Like, for instance, if you go to a great symphony, you might be moved to the depths by it.

Kierkegaard said something to this effect, that we can go to a great symphony, such as Beethoven's Fifth, but if we were to have that be all there is to life and we were to just go over and over and over again to symphonies and look at that attendance at concerts to satisfy us, we would sooner or later become bored, or the way he put it is, sooner or later there'll be a yawn. And that yawn, after a while, may become a scream. You often find that

the records of the songs that you, the CDs you get, the songs you listen to most, if you listen to them too much, they lose some of their initial excitement.

They no longer have the same power to move us as they once did. In a similar way, that's the idea of being a spectator as one stage of life, and it's good as far as it goes, but it's not where we want to be ultimately. Sooner or later it doesn't satisfy.

Kierkegaard said that the second stage along life's way is the ethical stage, or the moral stage. And this is the stage where we get down, so to speak, out of the stands, to use the sports metaphor, and get down onto the field. If you're in the NFL, in a football league, you get down out of the stands and put yourself on the field, you put yourself at great risk of injury when you've got 300 pound defensive or offensive linemen running down the field that are very strong and fast and ready to obliterate you with a hit.

It's a lot more risk to get out onto the playing field. And certainly as believers, we're meant to be more than spectators. We're meant to be more than sitting in the stands.

We're meant to be more than sitting in the pews. We're meant to be getting out there into the work world and being able to be salt and light there. And we're called also to be able to get out and be able to share the gospel with people, and be able to make the case for faith where it's appropriate, being able to give honest answers to honest questions that people ask.

And certainly that's the role of apologetics, is being able to provide honest answers to honest questions. That often people have obstacles. They can't accept the gospel unless they find a certain amount of plausibility or credibility.

If they think that it's a mere delusion, or if they think it's intrinsically evil, it's very difficult for anybody to even consider listening to it. So we need to get out and be able to speak to people in the culture. Get out of the stand, so to speak, and onto the playing field.

And that's the second stage, is the ethical. But that's not the ultimate stage, Kierkegaard said. The ultimate stage he desired was the religious stage.

And the religious stage is similar to the ethical stage in that you're out on the playing field, but there are different ways that people play the game. There are people that play the game, and then there are people that play the game at a whole higher order, with passion. I think of in the past, this will certainly date me, I go back to the days when I was growing up with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

And there was a, during the heyday years when the Steelers won the Super Bowl, there was a middle line backer there by the name of Jack Lambert. And he was incredible because he had such passion. He was relatively small for a middle line backer, but when he would, before a game and in the middle of a game, first of all he'd bounce off the walls before the game, and during the game if the Steelers were playing with a lack of energy, he would be screaming at them and inspire them to play at a whole different level.

He played the game with passion. You think of other players that do the same, perhaps Michael Jordan would be the picture of Michael Jordan coming in and dunking the ball with

his tongue hanging out with a very evident joy, or Magic Johnson, he'd go on and on with other players that tend to play with a whole different order, whole different drive, whole different set of passion. And that's what, of course Kierkegaard was not talking about football or basketball, but he's talking about living your life with passion, getting out of the pews and getting out onto the playing field and living your life with passion.

He said that he desired that men and women would get out there by faith Abraham, by faith Isaac, by faith Jacob, by faith Rahab, by faith Sarah, where men and women were getting out onto the playing field and living their lives with a kind of abandon, a passion. And that's what he desired, to see a whole different order of the way people lived out their lives. Friedrich Nietzsche said that people, it's not so much that people are weak, although he certainly saw the church as being weak, he saw God as a God that dies of pity, and he wanted to create a whole new race, a super race, where people would go out and sail their ships into uncharted seas, where people would go out and build their homes on the slopes of Vesuvius, the live volcano, do crazy acts of courage, but without any norms or without any values.

And yet, Nietzsche had a profound ambivalence towards Jesus. On the one hand, he reacted against Jesus. On the other hand, he had a great respect for Jesus.

And he died in insanity, signing his letters, The Crucified One. And he had this kind of love-hate relationship with Jesus throughout his life. I think we desperately need a recovery of leadership and of passion in the church today.

I had a professor, Dr. Gerstner, that was a professor of mine and a professor of R.C. Sproul's, probably the professor we point to as having the most influence on us. And Dr. Gerstner was talking to R.C. one time, R.C. Sproul, and R.C. was often the pessimist about the state of the church, and Dr. Gerstner the optimist. But this one time, Dr. Gerstner said that R.C., and he said with great pathos, he said, R.C., we in the church, we stand between Migdal and the sea, between Migdal, where the forces and armies of Pharaoh are on one side, and the Red Sea on the other side.

And we stand between Migdal and the sea without a Moses in our midst. He said, how I long for a Moses to come along and raise his arms and the people of God walk through on dry land. The question is, why don't we have characteristically or predominantly that kind of leadership in the church today? Another person that struggled with this issue is Francis Schaeffer.

I'm told that at one point in his life, he went through a crisis of faith. He was over in Europe, actually, to be a missionary. But at one point, he saw the lack of power, the lack of reality, you might say, lack of reality of love and of power in many of the religious leaders of his denomination and of the church of his time.

And so, according to the account, he went up into the top of a Swiss chalet and he would pace up there in the upper floor, in the attic, and he would walk back and forth and he was reconsidering the foundations of the faith, reconsidering what was really true and real with regard to his faith. And he came out of that time of several months much stronger, and he went out and spoke from that stage on with a greater urgency and a greater passion about

the truth of Christ. And he gave talks that led to the book True Spirituality and many other things.

But he had to go back and re-examine the foundations and see what the truth really was, whether he still believed that what he had to say was truth, that not only was true for him, but whether it was true truth, truth that applied whether you believe it or not, whether you prefer it or like it or not. And he came to the idea that we need to have a demonstration of the reality of Christ in thought and in life. And that was the call that Schaeffer gave to people, to demonstrate the reality of Christ in thought, to be able to take on the forces and the arguments of today.

We desperately need that. We desperately need that in the United States. We desperately need that, especially as we go over to United Kingdom and Europe, where the church is no longer given any kind of credibility, where it's very easily dismissed.

And a precondition to be able to speak the gospel in that kind of setting is to give the sense of the power and credibility of it. Same thing in Europe. It's also true in a different sense in these places where faith in Christ is exploding, in Africa and Asia and South America.

In all those places there's an incredible explosion of the number of believers. And there is a profound piety, at least at the very foundations, that's there. But in order for the believers there to really have roots, in order for the exploding numbers of people to have an influence on the society, they have to recover something of that lordship of Christ over all areas of life.

And that means they have to really believe that faith in Christ has answers to all the big questions of Africa or of Asia or of South America. There has to be a recovery of the truth of Christ in those places in order for faith in Christ to have its root, to have its ability to really be transformative in the society. Well, why has there been characteristically this lack of power in many segments of the church? Well, I would suggest it's a failure to understand the theology of the Ascension or the relationship between apologetics and the Ascension.

And particularly it has to do with a failure to understand the lordship of Christ, the power of the Spirit, and what Christ's role is in helping us to accomplish the mission that we have before us. Often in the church we set apart certain holidays. At least in the Protestant church there are really only a couple that are prominent.

One is Christmas that celebrates the birth of Christ, and then we have Good Friday that celebrates Christ's death and his atonement, his death on the cross. Then Easter Sunday, which focuses on the resurrection of Christ. And those are absolutely essential, far be it from me to minimize those massive events that have altered history.

In many ways it's the center point of history. All the things leading up to Christ and then the coming of Christ is a decisive event that we must look back to and appropriate it for the present and proclaim that gospel in terms of the Great Commission. But we do need to understand not just what Christ has done for us, but what he is doing for us, and what he will yet do for us.

And I think that's the significance of the Ascension. Occasionally you'll find, at least on the calendars, church calendars, maybe in the Catholic Church or the Episcopal Church, the Ascension, Ascension Sunday, but it's not really given a significant place. And so the question is, what is the significance of Ascension, of the Ascension, and why is it important, and what does it have to do with our bearing witness in the world and with apologetics? That's what I want to go a step further and to show that.

First of all, there's a clue there in Luke 24, verses 49 to 53, and it says this, And behold, I'm sending forth the promise of my Father upon you. This is the very end of the Gospel of Luke. And behold, I'm sending forth the promise of my Father upon you, but you are to stay in the city until you're clothed with power from on high.

(17:22 - 20:53)

And then he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And when it came about that he was blessing them, he parted from them, and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continuing in the temple, praising God. So it's a dramatic scene.

We have the Ascension mentioned here, and then also the beginning of Acts, and so it's not mentioned very often, but what's said here ought to shock us, because it seems counterintuitive. It seems like an oxymoron, seems like a contradiction in terms, because here's Jesus parting from the disciples. I mean, Jesus has been with them, and it must have been great to be able to be with Jesus, to be able to hear his teaching, to be able to see his miracles, to have his presence right next to you.

And now he was leaving them. He told them to wait for the promise of the Father and for power from on high, but when he parted from them, it said they returned to Jerusalem, what does it say, with great joy. Now, I know when I was parted, at least when my kids were young, from them, they would often cry.

They didn't want to be separated. Or if you think of soldiers, we see many pictures of soldiers going off to war, and the tears that are shed, and then the joy when these soldiers return to their families. So it seems strange that when this one who's been so decisive, so close, who you love so much, is taken away, rather than weeping, you have great joy.

What in the world would cause them to have this kind of great joy? What is it that they understood there that perhaps we might not understand? There's another passage that confirms this surprise. It's in John chapter 16, verses 7 following. And here's what Jesus says.

He says, but I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the helper shall not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you, and he, when he comes, will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. And concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold me. And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will disclose to you what is to come.

Well, what's surprising about this passage? I think it's particularly there in verse 7. In verse 7, it says, but I tell you the truth, it's to your advantage that I go away. Now, that's another surprising passage that seems very counterintuitive. It's better that I go away than if I stay.

(20:53 - 21:51)

My absence is better than my presence. Now, I ask, how can that possibly be? It's much better, I would think, if I were a disciple to say, well, I'd rather you stay than you go. How can that possibly be the case that it's to your advantage that I go away? Wouldn't it be great to be able to, for you to be there and be able to hear Jesus speak, to be able to see a miracle, to be able to see Jesus standing at Lazarus's tomb and saying there, Lazarus, come forth, and to have Lazarus waddling out with grave clothes on after being dead four days, or see Jesus raise the widow of Nain's son, or to see Jesus feed the 5,000, or walking on water? Perhaps, and I've often thought about that, if I could just see a miracle like that, I wouldn't mind if my head were rolling in the sand of the arena, sands of the arena.

(21:52 - 23:01)

Perhaps we could go and do anything if we were just to see something of that kind of power. And so what do you mean, Jesus, that it's better that I go away than if I stay? So what is it that Jesus meant, and what is it, and I think that it was the disciples understood this profound truth, that it was better that Jesus goes than if he stays. And why is that the case? Well, I want to suggest that there's three basic reasons, and it's first of all, where Christ was going, secondly, who he was going to send in his place, and third, what he was going to do when he got there.

All right, where he was going, who he was going to send in his place, and what he was going to do when he got there. But where was Christ going when he ascended? He was going away not on vacation, but to be seated at the right hand of God. That's called in theology, the session.

(23:01 - 25:01)

What does it mean to be seated at the right hand of God, since God doesn't literally have a right hand? It means to be put in the position of power and authority. He was coronated king. He became, in a distinctive sense, the king of kings and the lord of lords.

And this idea of the lordship of Christ is essential not only for living out our life, but for apologetics as well. This idea of the lordship of Christ was very much there at the root of the early church. In fact, at the very earliest church, they didn't have or give the apostles' creed so much as the earliest confession was, Jesus is Lord.

And it was that confession that they were tempted to compromise. When Nero and others came along, the Roman government wanted Christians to somehow make their allegiance to the state clear, what they had to do was to say, Kaiser Kyrios, Caesar is Lord, and usually throw a little bit of incense on the altar, and in some cases also they were called to curse Christ. And that was something a true believer could not do.

Could not, first of all, say Kaiser Kyrios, because it meant there not just that Caesar is master or sir in some way, but that he was God. And they wouldn't say that. So in many ways, the reason that Christians were thrown to the arena, reason that they were burned alive by Nero as torches in his garden, reason they were thrown to the dogs with animal skins on them, was because they wouldn't say Kaiser Kyrios and do the other things as well.

(25:01 - 30:04)

This idea Jesus is Lord was crucial. If you look at the beginning of 1 Corinthians chapter 12, it said no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit, because in that it was very costly to say Jesus is Lord. And it says, interestingly, in that very same context at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 12, no one can say Jesus is cursed by the Holy Spirit, because I think in the early church, especially in the Jewish context, when Christians would assert that early confession, Jesus is Lord, often it would come back, Jesus is cursed.

Look at the way that Jesus was crucified, hung on a tree, and wasn't anybody hung on a tree cursed? Wasn't he crucified at the hands of Gentiles, the Romans, and thus at the hands of unclean people? Wasn't he crucified outside the city walls, outside the camp, so to speak? So he was triply cursed. It was very evident to the Jews that he was cursed, so this idea of Jesus is Lord versus Jesus is cursed was true within the Jewish context, but even it was just as radical a confession within the context of Rome, because of the cost of making that kind of confession. And this idea that Jesus is Lord is essential in not only our callings and the way we live out our lives, but it's essential for apologetics and for an understanding of truth.

In fact, in the classic verse on apologetics in 1 Peter 3 15, if you look at just prior to that verse, it says, don't fear their intimidation, it says, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, and then it goes on to talk about being able to give a reasonable defense for the hope that's in you, that the real basis for making that kind of confession of Christ or being able to make your apologetic or your defense is that you're not intimidated, first of all, by the culture around you, and that you do sanctify Christ as Lord. You have that certainty, that sense that he is Lord, and then you can give your defense without being defensive. Often the reason we are defensive is that we're intimidated or afraid that the questions that are asked to us might make our faith crumble, but when you have come to understand the Lordship of Christ in all areas of life and how profoundly true it is, and how much it fits all of reality, then there's a confidence in going in there that you can afford to be, as it goes on to say, it says to sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, being able to give a reasonable defense for the hope that's in you, yet with gentleness and reference or respect.

So you can afford to be gentle as opposed to be reactive and defensive. Now, you can afford to be respectful or referent with respect to God and with respect to respecting the dignity of people. You have a different attitude and different response as you go in to that setting, when you understand how profoundly true it is to say that Jesus is Lord.

B.B. Warfield has a classic quote along these lines. In one of his shorter writings, he says this, that we must not then, as Christians, assume an attitude of antagonism towards the truths of reason, or to the truths of philosophy, or the truths of science, or the truths of history, or the truths of criticism. As children of the light, we must be careful to keep ourselves open to every ray of light.

Let us then cultivate an attitude of courage as over against the investigations of the day. None should be more zealous in them than we. None should be more quick to discern truth in every field, more hospitable to receive it, more loyal to follow it, whithersoever it leads.

It's not for Christians to be lukewarm in regard to the investigations and discoveries of the time. Rather, as followers of the truth, indeed, we can have no safety in science or in philosophy, save in the arms of truth. It is for us, therefore, as Christians, to push investigation to the utmost, to be leaders in every science, to stand in the vein that is the forefront of criticism, to be the first to catch at every field the revealer of truth who is also our Redeemer.

The curse of the church has been her apathy to truth, in which she's often left to her enemies that study of nature and of history and of philosophy, and even that investigation of her own peculiar treasures to the scriptures of God, which should have been her chief concern. She has nothing to fear from truth, but she has everything to fear, and she's already suffered nearly everything from ignorance. All truth belongs to us as followers of Christ, the truth.

(30:05 - 34:12)

Let us at length enter into our inheritance. This idea of understanding the truth profoundly in every field of life is something that's been stressed. Certainly, it's there biblically, being able in 2 Corinthians 10, verses 3 to 5, to tear down all speculations that are raised up against the knowledge of God, and then also take every thought captured to Christ, to be able to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, to understand, as Augustine did, that all truth is God's truth.

And Augustine would argue something along these lines, that because all truth is God's truth, we ought to learn everything we can about anything we can, because every particular truth will lead us back to the God of truth. That's why we can be fearless as we look at truth. We don't have to be afraid of the implications in the sciences or in philosophy or in history or in whatever arena we're addressing truth.

It's this idea of facing truth wherever it is. We serve the one who's the way, the truth, and the life, the one who's king of kings, lord of lords. We don't have to be afraid of anything that's part of God's creation, undermining our faith, but we need to come to that understanding, that that's true, and have that be the basis on which we live, the basis on which we speak, basis of our attitudes with regard to life, are all rooted in that particular idea.

Abraham Kuyper, who was prime minister of Holland at one point, and he's a great scholar of the church as well, he said that there's not one square inch of this world where Christ does not say, mine. So that's this idea of the lordship of Christ and how far it extends as essential at its very foundation. What we need is not only to be able to give a defense, a reasonable defense for the hope that's in us, that's good to be sure, to be able to really address the objections that really prevent people from taking faith in Christ seriously, but we also need to be able to carry out that truth in the way that we live out our lives, in our professions.

C.S. Lewis has a classic essay at one point on Christian apologetics, you can find it in God in the Dock collection of essays, and in that essay he makes the point, he makes the case that it's a good thing to be able to present a case for faith, and he certainly would do that. For instance, he would get up in an evangelistic meeting and give a 20-minute talk on apologetics, and then Stephen Olford, who was an evangelist, would get up and speak the gospel in that context. In many ways, the apologetics provided a preparation for faith that was much needed.

But he said that even then, people will only stay so long, and only so many people will even listen to your case, and even when they do, they might listen to it for a half hour or an hour, but then they'll be back right in the context of their public school system, or in the context of the university, or in the context of the work world, that can in many cases be very secularized, and how do you then address that kind of issue? How do you keep it before people's attention? Here's what he says. He says, we can make people often attend to the Christian point of view for half an hour or so, or maybe at most an hour, but the moment that they've gone away from our lecture or laid down our article, they're plunged back into a world where the opposite position is taken for granted. As long as that situation exists, widespread success is simply impossible.

(34:13 - 34:54)

We must attack the enemy's line of communication. What we want is not more little books about Christianity, but more little books by Christians on other subjects, where their Christianity latent. You see this most easily if you look at it the other way around.

Our faith is not likely to be shaken by any book on Hinduism, but if whenever we read an elementary book on geology, botany, politics, or astronomy, if we found that its implications were Hindu, that would shake us. It's not the books written in direct defense of materialism that make the modern man a materialist. It's the materialist assumptions in all the other books.

(34:55 - 49:57)

In the same way, it is not books on Christianity that will really trouble him, but he would be troubled if he wanted a cheap popular introduction to some science. The best work on the market was always by a Christian. The first step to the reconversion of this country is a series produced by Christians which can beat the penguin and the thinker's library on their own ground.

It's Christianity would have to be latent, not explicit. And of course, it's science perfectly honest. Science twisted in the apologetics would be folly and sin.

This idea of applying faith in Christ in all areas of our life and living it out within the context of the world as well as being able to give a case for the faith and to be excellent in our profession, to be able to have a worldview that's profoundly informed by the principles of the gospel, but a worldview that's able to go out and be applied to all areas of calling, be able to go out and engage various aspects of culture. It's not only essential as C.S. Lewis points out here, but it's, I would say, a foundational assumption of the C.S. Lewis Institute and its mission is to really have people be deeply grounded in the truths of scripture and then be really equipped to engage the world, not only with apologetics, but to be able to

live out their life in personal and public life. That's the purpose statement of the C.S. Lewis Institute, to be able to, in the legacy of Lewis, develop disciples that can articulate, defend, and live faith in Christ through personal and public life.

What kind of disciples? Ones that can articulate the faith, be able to understand profoundly the biblical theological questions, be able to give some clarity when people raise questions about it, to help it be intelligible to people that couldn't understand it. Something like what C.S. Lewis did with Mere Christianity, be able to do that in a way that you can explain the faith in a way that connects with people, defend the faith, be able to give answers, honest questions, honest answers to honest questions, and live the faith, not only in your own personal life, which is important, but in public life, in your profession. That's what's needed in order to make a difference, not only in Washington D.C., but in many other cities throughout the country and throughout the world, to be able to have that kind of call where we can have disciples that articulate, defend, and live faith in Christ, and are able to do it in personal and public life.

So this whole idea of our faith being latent, even when we're in our profession and our scholarship or our science, so to speak, for the science is impeccable, not at all compromised or twisted by not making arguments just on the basis of faith, but making our arguments based upon fact and evidence, but being able to put it forward clearly and excellently. And we have people that model that kind of thing in the church, and that's of course always a great thing when we see that, but we need to have more people that can do that in this culture if we're going to have a widespread witness for the gospel or be able to transform things on a higher level. G.K. Chesterton made the statement that education is implication.

Education is implication. We don't remember when we hear a speaker or teacher, perhaps we have a really great teacher that has really influenced us. Think of the best teacher you've ever heard or the teacher that's most influenced your life.

How many direct quotes can you remember from that teacher? Well, maybe a few. Maybe a few stories, maybe a few quotes, but usually what you remember is not so much what is explicitly said, but what is implied in what is said, the kinds of things that they get passionate about, and that somehow impressed itself on your soul. And even though you may not be able to say it in exactly the same words in every case that they used, you can articulate it in other words.

Often what we pick up in culture in general and in teachers is what's implicit in what's said, and I think we need to understand that as we engage the culture, be able to make our faith in Christ in a powerful way explicitly, but also have it come through implicitly, so that education is implication. I remember a professor who was at Wheaton College, the head of the education department, said he went out to secular schools, and where in many cases they can't really mention the name of Jesus or give a direct presentation of the gospel itself, but he said, well, first of all, he found that in all of the schools that he was there to evaluate as part of his job, he found that at least the top couple teachers were usually Christian. And it's not that they were able to say their faith explicitly, but it always nevertheless came through.

And what he said is, and it's a variation on Chesterton, education is implication, he said the teacher is the moral value. That the truth is not only taught, but it's caught, is the way that it's sometimes put. It somehow comes through nevertheless, and so we need to be able to live out our lives and be able to make it explicit, but we need to have it be latent and implicit, not only in the way we live our lives in the public arena, but in the way we write our articles, the way we write books, the way we do introductions to these fields, as C.S. Lewis was talking about so powerfully.

We need to also not only know the Bible and scripture, but we need to be able to engage culture, not only all the different disciplines, as Warfield talks about, but be able to make the link to the things that matter most to people, the things that fascinate them, say the most popular music groups or the most popular television programs, most popular movies, the ones that really impact people, to be able to make that connection, be able to address these movies and show how the concerns that are there in these great movies, if you take these concerns that materialism, for instance, undermines these things, or pantheism does, and on the other hand, the implications, the things that are so greatly desired, find its true ground within faith in Christ, to be able to take that which the culture is most passionate about and be able to look at it in the context of the gospel. That's utterly crucial for us as we engage the world. Francis Schaeffer was a model of that in dealing with the latest in modern art or movies.

I had one of the people that worked with Francis Schaeffer, Donald Drew, wrote a book on film and films, really analyzing films and how the themes that are present there are often evocative or really point towards issues that the gospel has answers to address, and so on and so on. We need to be those who understand the culture, those who understand the scriptures. Karl Barth used to say that we ought to go into the world with the bible in one hand, the newspaper in the other, be able to relate the scriptures to the current events of the day, but I'd make it even broader than that and say to be able to engage the various things that are there within the culture.

Unfortunately, there are people out there that are about that business. You think of, say, Mark Rogers and people with the Clapham Group and the Wedgwood Circle that are trying to produce quality Christian films that are not necessarily evangelistic but that have profound positive moral values that come through those films, or in many other cases, to have believers be the most excellent in every field. It's a great vision.

It's a very important thing. It shows how apologetics or faith in Christ is really grounded in this lordship of Christ. It's also, you might point to a biblical example of this in Acts chapter 17, where Paul is up on Mars Hill.

He goes to Athens and the first thing he does, and by the way, he often characteristically did this when he'd go to a city, the first thing he did was he'd go to the synagogues and he'd take the scriptures and he'd open up the scriptures and give a case from prophecy that Jesus was the Christ and that it was prophesied that he would die and be raised and that was decisive for our lives. That would be his first venue he would always go to, but then he would go out to the general culture and in the Greek culture they didn't have a knowledge or understanding of scripture. In many cases had never either heard of it or never read it and so it was difficult, if not impossible, to make that as the foundation.

So what he would do is he would start with a creation or start with something that was there in their culture to be able to make his case. Like for instance, on Mars Hill, when he got up with the Athenian philosophers, he would talk about the altar to the unknown God. I see that you're very religious and you have this altar to the unknown God that's out here and he'd start there and then he ended up quoting a couple of their pagan poets, not to say that they understood the truth or the whole truth, but they understood some truths that really provided a foundation for his argument.

There are certain points of contact that he made within the context of the culture there and we need to be able to learn how to do that with our culture, be able to understand people, the things people care about, the authors, the poets, the movies that people care most about and be able to relate them to the truth of the gospel as well as being able to make explicit arguments when appropriate or when necessary. Well, second major thing about the Ascension and apologetics is who he was sending in his place and that is the Holy Spirit, particularly the Holy Spirit who was the advocate. In this passage in John 16, it says, it's to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away the helper shall not come to you but if I go I will send him to you.

Now this word helper sometimes translated comforter in the King James or advocate in other places is actually the Greek word parakletos and parakletos has two different roots, Greek roots that are part of it. One is para which means alongside of and the other is the root word kaleo which means to call. So very literally the word parakletos means to call alongside of but in the Greek culture it wasn't just to call anybody by your side.

It tended to be used more as a lawyer or as an attorney who would be with you and it wasn't just any kind of attorney. It was one that was a friend in court or a legal friend, one who was not just there because they're on retainer or because they were assigned by the state as a court-appointed attorney but it was one that was there passionately arguing your case because they cared about you, because they were a friend of the family or your friend. So they were arguing it in a whole new way.

So this idea of the Holy Spirit as the parakletos, as the one who's either I suppose the prosecuting attorney you might say or that defense attorney whichever you might want to say for you and what would this parakletos do when he comes? You might say what is the place of the Holy Spirit as advocate or as parakletos or as this legal friend? Is it to convict us? Well the Holy Spirit certainly does do that but what is it exactly? The Holy Spirit works in many ways but what's the particular role the Holy Spirit is advocate? Well look at verse eight. It says, and he when he comes will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. He will convict the world concerning sin righteousness and judgment and I would maintain that there is no true evangelism, no true outreach unless the Spirit works with whatever you do, whatever you say, your presentation of the gospel or your apologetics to drive home that message in people's hearts and particularly with respect to these three things, sin, righteousness, and judgment.

You can talk about a lot of other issues and eliminate or really address questions but one of the things you can't do is convict someone of sin and here's what it says within this passage. It says concerning sin because they do not believe in me and concerning righteousness

because I go to the Father and you no longer behold me and concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged and particularly people need to be convicted of the sin of unbelief that there's all kinds of evidences that are out there in the world. In Romans 1 it says that these things are clearly seen that God's eternal power and deity and they're so clear that people are without excuse.

They're without an apologetic but it's particularly the Spirit that comes along to convict concerning sin and concerning righteousness it says because I go to the Father and you no longer behold me. In many ways the whole message of the gospel is a message about righteousness, that God is righteous, that we are unrighteous, that the righteousness of Christ on the cross comes to cover our sin and allow us to be transformed and then to grow in sanctification and in righteousness as we continue on in our lives. But notice particularly what it says here.

(49:58 - 52:20)

It's not speaking specifically to that. It says in concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you no longer behold me. When Christ was there according to the flesh you could look at him and see him.

There had to be a lot that came through not only explicitly but implicitly to be able to see the presence of Christ, to be able to see not only that he was good in some abstract sense but he was winsome and attractive and not only one who conveyed truth and goodness but also beauty and that would communicate itself in a very powerful way. And so that when Jesus according to the flesh is taken away we need the Spirit to show not only the goodness, to show what is good and what is evil and to convict people of sin but to show the winsomeness and attractiveness of Christ, to show the beauty of righteousness. We might think of righteousness as being something abstract.

Maybe the word righteousness could bring up the specter of self-righteousness which is often very ugly. But the idea of the attractiveness of righteousness, especially the righteousness that Christ comes to demonstrate on the cross and then to bring to bear on our own lives with respect to our justification and with respect to our sanctification. So concerning righteousness and concerning judgment certainly that's one of the most difficult subjects to speak about in this culture is the idea of judgment or idea of heaven or the idea of hell.

But you know it's not even particularly addressing that right here. It's addressing the idea and concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged and I think the idea here is that one of the great problems of faith in Christ is the problem of evil. If God is all-powerful he could eliminate evil.

If God is all good he would eliminate evil. The evil is not eliminated therefore there is no such God. That problem of evil is often an obstacle for many.

But notice what it says, because the ruler of this world has been judged. Among other things we can give answers to that and certainly will be part of this series that we deal with the problem of evil. But it's particularly that God has done something decisive about evil.

(52:20 - 53:09)

That he sent his son to win the victory. It's like D-Day. On D-Day the decisive battle was fought that after that in the Second World War the outcome was no longer in doubt.

In many ways when the ruler of this world has been judged and there's been that kind of judgment that's come then all of a sudden we view the world in a whole different context. It's more of a mopping up operation and we know what the end will be. The victory has been won.

It's just a matter of actually experiencing the realization of that victory. I mean after D-Day there had to be a lot of other battles to be fought but the outcome is not in doubt. But the idea of concerning judgment that God has done something decisive about this issue of evil that will alter the outcome of things.

(53:10 - 57:49)

We can have hope and trust in the outcome in the future and it says but he when he the spirit of truth comes he will guide he will guide you into all truth for he will not speak on his own initiative but whatever he hears he will speak and he will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify me. We particularly need the spirit as we go out and speak the message of the gospel and as we give our apologetic.

It's not enough to just give arguments that are cold and abstract and be argumentative or it's not important in fact it's important not to just go about winning the argument but to understand it's important to win the person to speak the truth in law to do it in a winsome way to do it in a way that's empowered by the spirit especially as we walk into the arena of the world in our work or engaging people for the sake of the gospel. Finally, what has Christ gone away to do? Well for many things that he's gone away to do but particularly to pray for us. In Hebrews 7 25 it says since he always lives to make intercession for them or in Romans 8 34 it says and Christ died for us rose for us reigns in power for us and prays for us.

Whoever thought about the implication of Christ not only empowering us in terms of the message but actually praying for us that Christ is at the right hand of God at the in the position of power and authority and he's not only ruling as lord in some detached way that looks down on us but he's actually praying for us. You think of a specific instance of that in Luke chapter 22 verses 31 and 32 where Simon Peter compromised his previous profession. I alone would die for you he said but then we know how he denied it three times with curses and swearing but Jesus says in Luke 22 verses 31 and 32 Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and you when you have turned strengthen your brothers so that a difference in reason why Simon did turn it's not just that he came to realize his sin which of course he did but that Christ prayed for him.

Have you ever thought of that when you walk into the arena where things are difficult where you might be intimidated and afraid to know you have not only the power of the spirit going before you but you have Christ praying for you as you do so. There's a real comfort there and a sense of not only Christ praying for you but if you ask the presence of the spirit to allow you to walk into that arena and speak more powerfully than ever before. So to conclude what we have to say what is this theology of the ascension or what's the connection between apologetics and the ascension? What essentially relates to what Christ

is doing for us now not just in the past and what he will continue to do for us in the future and that is he's gone away where to be seated at the right hand to be the reigning lord and we need to come to a deeper understanding of what the lordship of Christ is and that's got to be the foundation for our apologetics to sanctify Christ as lord in our hearts and then be able to give a reasonable defense and we need who the holy spirit the power to witness the spirit that will convict the world concerning sin righteousness and judgment and what does Christ do when he ascends to heaven well among other things he prays for us and that ought to allow us to understand that we have a great helper a great advocate one who prays for us effectively so when we walk into the arena we have not only our own gifts and we not only have Christ being lord we have the power of the spirit and we have Christ actually caring for how we relate within a particular situation.

(57:50 - 59:01)

There's a poem I came across by George McLeod and here's what it says. I simply argue that the cross be raised again at the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church. I'm recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles but on a cross between two thieves on a town garbage heap at a crossroads of politics so cosmopolitan that they had to write his title in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek and at the kind of place where cynics talk smut and thieves curse and soldiers gamble because that is where he died and that is what he died about and that is where Christ's men ought to be and what the church people ought to be about.

We need to be those who are able to go out and engage the world in all kinds of ways and it's often not only being able to argue for the faith but being able to live it out speaking the truth in love but living it out in our profession and in our callings that real impact will be made within this culture and within other cultures throughout the world.