

Set 3 - Lecture 2

(0:18 - 9:59)

All right, we're going to be dealing in this session with faith and reason and try to look at the relative views on it. It will be less of a philosophical look at faith and reason and more of a imaginative look at faith and reason. So let's start out with a word of prayer before we begin.

Lord, thank you for this time where we can come together and wrestle with important ideas that will provide a foundation for our faith and give us ability to understand where we stand and be able to speak to others more clearly. And I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts might be acceptable to you, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. I think the question is, what is apologetics? It's not apologizing for your faith.

In fact, one definition that someone gave in jest was that apologetics means never having to say you're sorry that you're a believer or apologize for to let you know that there's great intellectual credibility, that if there are questions that cannot be answered, it will be the first time in 2,000 years that those questions are not able to be answered, that you can have confidence in your faith. And I want you to learn some of the foundations for that as we go along here. But the idea of apologetics comes from the Greek word *apologia*.

The Greek word *apologia* means to be able to give a defense, to be able to give a reasonable defense, and it was used in the Greek culture to mean a legal brief or something that had an ordered structure to it, so that that's the idea, be able to give a reasonable defense. And I'd like to look at the passage a little bit in context where we get this idea of apologetics. Let's look at 1 Peter, if you have your Bibles, 1 Peter chapter 3, we'll start from verse 14 and go down to verse 17.

Let's look at it in its framework. It says, but if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed, and do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled. But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense, that's the word for *apologia*, to everyone who gives you, who asks you to give an account for the hope that's in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

And keep a good conscience, so that in the thing in which you're slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right, rather than for doing what is wrong. Notice here, particularly in the verses preceding, verse 15, you have the *apologia* right there at the heart.

But in verse 14, it talks about an attitude with which you should approach this topic of giving a defense, particularly not in a fearful way, or in a way that's easily intimidated by people around you. I think all too often, it's easy for believers, as they share their faith or deal with questions, to become defensive. And it's far from being the attitude that we should hold.

As a matter of fact, there's a passage, that passage said, do not fear their intimidation, is actually echoing a passage in Isaiah chapter 8, verses 11 to 13. For thus the Lord spoke to me with a mighty power, and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people saying, you are not to say it is conspiracy, in regard to all that this people call a conspiracy. And you are not to fear what they fear, or be in dread of it.

It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy, and he shall be your fear, and he shall be your dread. So again, that passage in 1 Peter 3.14, that precedes the passage on apologetics, is drawn from this. Let's look at it one more time.

For the Lord spoke to me with mighty power, and instructed me to not to walk in the way of this people. It's easy for people to be fearful, or defensive, or reactionary to conspiracies, or difficulties, or be intimidated by the situation around them. And it says that you're not to say it is a conspiracy, in regard to all that this people call a conspiracy.

You're not to be thinking in the same way, or reacting in the same way, that people around you in the culture are doing. And you are not to fear what they fear, or be in dread of it. You're not to have a basically fearful or defensive attitude in the way that you approach things.

Again, we talked about in the last lecture about a kind of perfect fear that drives out love, and a kind of perfect love that drives out fear. There ought to be a confidence, and where does this confidence come from? It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy, and he shall be your fear, and he shall be your dread. When you get a perspective on how you approach life, you shouldn't come at it from a fearful perspective, because that's essentially a lack of faith, and a lack of trust in who God is.

The more you understand and fear God, there's a sense in which that higher fear relativizes, or drives out that lesser fear. The more confident you are, the more you put your trust in God, the less you're fearful in going into the situation of sharing your faith. And again it says in 1st Peter 3.14, and do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled.

Again, echoing that passage from Isaiah. But, as we go into the situation with a lack of fear, it says, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. It echoes that passage in Isaiah, is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy, and he shall be your fear, and he shall be your dread.

But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. You regard Christ as holy here, and you regard him as Lord. You put your confidence and your trust in him, and that alters the attitude with which you approach the engagement with people in the world.

So that as you are in a courageous perspective, having faith in God, you sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account. So that you're called to always be ready to prepare yourself so you're able to give an ordered account of your faith. But it's not meant to be, I think, just an abstracted account, although it's a value to study philosophy, and we will be doing that, and to study historical evidences, but it's not to be something that's just a boring, dry dissertation.

It's meant to, it says, be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that's in you, so that there's something where you've really thought deeply about your faith, and you have a whole lot of ideas that are there, you have a structure, a framework out of which you respond, but then you respond personally about those things that have made a difference to you. Those ideas that have really impacted you,

then, are the things that you share. So it's a personalized account of the ideas that you've gotten.

It's all too easy to just download a philosophical argument on someone. That rarely does good to people, although sometimes it can help, but rarely do you have the opportunity to do that, and most of the time it's of help for you to do it as part of your story, to share that substantial issues that have given you confidence that your faith in Christ has not only impacted your experience, but that it's really true. I was talking to someone recently that said, well, you know, I can see that Christianity works for believers, and it's a good thing for them, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's true.

So that's the question we have to address. Not only an experiential thing, but is it really true? It says, be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that's in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. Not only the personal attitude, but the gentleness, not in a hostile, belligerent, closed-minded, defensive manner or arrogant fashion, but with gentleness.

I suppose love is engaged here, too. A real caring about the other person, a kind of gentle approach to the issue, not heavy-handed, not trying to beat other people over the head with arguments, but a gentle response. And yet, it says, and with reverence.

(10:00 - 15:19)

Now, this reverence could be viewed one or the other way. Probably it doesn't matter if both fit together. One kind of reverence would be respect and reverence for the dignity of other people.

And that's, of course, a very important thing, that other people that you talk to, everyone you talk to, is made in the image of God. The way C.S. Lewis put it is, you've never met a mere mortal. The people you're sitting next to right now are going to live forever.

There are no ordinary people. You've never met a mere mortal. He says, nations, cultures, arts, civilizations, what are they? They are to our life as a life of a gnat.

G-N-A-T, life of a gnat. So that even the largest civilization that's lasted for the most years will be nothing, be a drop in the bucket compared to the life of the person sitting next to you, that are going to live forever and ever, either under salvation or judgment. So it gives you an internal perspective on things.

So you have respect for the people you talk to as an image bearer of God. And it could mean also this, that you have reverence or respect towards God, that you have a charge here to be, in a way, responsible for how you put forward your faith. You could put people off by your attitude, or you could be winsome and draw people towards the faith, to be able to consider the claims of Christ.

So I suppose your reference or respect towards God would also be translated in terms of a respect and a gentle way that you communicate your faith to others. So it probably doesn't matter in the end which interpretation you take of it, they both end up moving in the same direction. It goes on, and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you're slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

So it's important, I suppose, to show by your example what the faith is. People often are drawn, not just by preaching and apologetics, but by practice, and particularly your practice. And the way you put together your life, the way you live out your faith.

I wrote a book that we'll be talking about later called Love the Ultimate Apologetic. How will people know that you are disciples or true believers in Christ? They will know it by your love, by the way you really care for people around you, so that when you have a good conscience and you're living out your faith, and even how you deal with difficulty. It says in verse 17, for it is better if God should will it so, that you should suffer for doing what's right than doing what's wrong.

So that even the way you suffer and the way you go through difficulty, the way you go through conflict, has a marked different quality from the people around you. That's also a testimony to the nature of the faith that's forward. C. S. Lewis said that it's often what we practice rather than what we preach that's the greatest ingredient to the faith of others.

So that you shouldn't divorce this idea of practice from your idea of faith, so that it's not only give a reasonable defense, but look at the framework, the context in which it's embedded within this passage. Both the attitude and manner with which you come to the defense, and some of the other things that should accompany it. That's very important to keep in context.

Often we have the reasonable defense, and that's all we say about apologetics, but it's important to see the context along the way there. I think that apologetics, or giving it this kind of reasonable defense, is important not only for non-believers as we explain our faith to others, but it's also important for us as believers. Because if we have deep doubts or questions from who knows what source, whether experiences we have, suffering, difficult things that have happened in your life, or to others in your life that you're close to, say a parent or brother, sister, aunt or uncle.

Often it's suffering and difficulty. Sometimes it's intellectual questions, a book you've read, courses you took in the university, questions people have asked that lodge in the back of your mind and really prevent you, perhaps, from really being committed to faith, or maybe prevent you from reading Scripture with confidence. You're not going to grow very much as a Christian if you don't believe the Bible's the Word of God, and if you have deep questions about that, as many people have, it's difficult for you to use that means of grace.

Same way, it's going to be difficult for you to pray if you're not really convinced that God exists and He hears you, and He's really going to address the issues and concerns that you raise. So it's important to have a confidence and trust in these things. It makes a tremendous difference in the way you live out your faith, whether you believe that it's true.

(15:19 - 19:01)

And it's often those objections that rattle around in your brain that you haven't maybe addressed fully that we need to address in this class. I'll be addressing some of these in lectures, and also we can have discussion about these, and I'll be providing other resources that you can look to to address these questions as well. So what is the place of apologetics

within evangelism? And there are really three basic aspects that are involved with saving faith.

Knowledge, assent, and trust. Just to show you that these things have been around for a long time, I'll just do it in Latin here, that it's *notitia assensus fiducia*. These are classic distinctions about the nature of saving faith.

First of all, knowledge. That you need to have a certain knowledge of the gospel, I think, in order to come to saving faith. Well, what is that minimum content of the faith that we need to hold to? That's not easy to say exactly or precisely, but I suppose certainly to believe that God exists, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that we're sinners, that he died on the cross for our sins, that he was raised from the dead.

Those, I think, would be basic essentials of the faith. And it doesn't take necessarily a very sophisticated understanding of these things in a theological sense for you to be a believer. You don't have to have a great IQ or intellect.

You don't have to have great age or sophisticated ideas. For instance, Jonathan Edwards, who perhaps is America's greatest philosopher, theologian, was convinced and wrote actually an essay after his examination of four-year-old Phoebe Bartlett. And he was utterly convinced that Phoebe was truly a believer after his careful examination of her, and she proved to be a faithful believer throughout her life.

And I don't think I'd want to limit it to a four-year-old. It's when you can understand and engage with the basic issues of the content of the gospel. But I think there is a content that's there, a certain minimum content that's there.

And someone could put forth the content of the gospel accurately. Say, a secularist or an atheist could give an accurate statement of what the gospel is, but not believe it. Someone in a more liberal seminary could say that evangelicals believe that the gospel means believing in God or the Trinity or the deity of Christ and sin, and not believe that any of these things are true in accordance with reality, or not believe that Christ was raised from the dead.

So it's very easily possible that someone could have the knowledge of the gospel and yet not be a believer. So the second step along the way is to move not only beyond knowledge, but to assent to that knowledge. And assent means to actually believe that it's true, actually believe that God does really exist, that he's a rewarder of those who seek him.

That's Hebrews 11:6, that Jesus was really raised from the dead, and so on and so on. That you do come to assent or believe that these things are really true. Now, one objection to apologetics that I often hear is this, that the problem is not moral or intellectual.

(19:02 - 34:01)

This problem is moral, not intellectual. And the problem is moral, not intellectual. Or you can't argue somebody into the kingdom.

And I would agree with both of those statements, but say that nevertheless, that apologetics has an important role within saving faith. I'd say coming to assent is a necessary

but not sufficient condition for saving faith. Let me say that again, that having assent to the faith is a necessary but not sufficient condition for saving faith.

It doesn't take you all the way, but it's a necessary foundation, a necessary precondition for faith. Same thing with regard to knowledge. Your presentation of the gospel, the giving of gospel content, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for saving faith.

Just the fact that it doesn't take you all the way doesn't mean that it's not an essential thing to have as a foundation. So that again, our knowledge of the faith is a necessary but not sufficient condition for saving faith. And our assent, which you can do with regard to apologetics, move people towards assent, doesn't take you all the way, but it takes you part of the way, gives you an essential foundation for saving faith.

But the ultimate stage is to move beyond knowledge and assent to trust, to actually commit yourself to that which you have heard and have come to understand, and that which you have come to believe is true, and actually entrust yourself to it. I had a professor that said one time that knowledge and assent only qualifies you to be a demon, because even the demons believe and tremble. So that you could believe that faith in Christ is true, and know what it is, and hate it.

You don't necessarily, doesn't necessarily lead to trust or a love for it, but of course that's the essential stage where you ought to be. And it's the Holy Spirit that works along with knowledge and assent to produce that saving faith. Now I'm going to use this chair here for a second as an illustration.

Now I could believe that this chair will hold me up. You know, it seems to be very sturdy and pretty well made. I could test it a little bit, and got a strong foundation, and okay.

And I, the question is, do I really want to entrust myself to it? And actually, it's only by actually sitting in this chair that I actually demonstrate my trust. I was confident that it would hold me up, and it actually did. Now it would have been rather embarrassing if that chair would have crumpled, but it did actually hold up under my weight.

And that's what faith in Christ is. There's another famous illustration that's often used, a classic one, that there's a tightrope walker called Blondine that used to do spectacular feats. Like for instance, one time he had a tightrope over Niagara Falls, and he had a, he would walk back and forth across this tightrope.

And he one time took a wheelbarrow and put, you know, big things, say the weight of a person in this wheelbarrow, and walk back and forth across Niagara Falls with this wheelbarrow. And then he came to the crowd and he said, do you believe that I could put a person in here and go across and back with a person? I've already had one for, say, 200 pounds. You think I could do that with a person? They said, oh yes, Blondine, we believe that you could do it with a person.

Okay, which one of you wants to get in the wheelbarrow? And of course, nobody was willing to do that, even though theoretically they believed that he could do it, and he probably could have done it, but they were not necessarily willing to entrust themselves to it

unnecessarily. Same thing with regard to the gospel. We could believe that, know what the gospel is and believe it's true, but not actually entrust ourselves to it.

So what we can do, we can't make somebody trust, but we can present the gospel and we can move people towards ascent. Presentation of the gospel is the knowledge, the apologetics is moving people towards ascent, necessary preconditions for faith, and then we can encourage people to trust, but that's sooner or later in their hands and in the place of the Holy Spirit to apply the message of the gospel and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to your apologetics to help produce saving faith as well. The spirit can work both in terms of the presentation of the gospel and in terms of your defense, your reasons for faith that you give.

All right, let's look at some varieties of approaches to apologetics, and again, if you want a more philosophical analysis of this, I wrote a book with R.C. Sproul and John Gerstner called Classical Apologetics. It deals with different philosophical methodologies in approaching this issue and does a critique of other approaches, and I could have given that kind of approach here. I decided to keep it a little bit lighter and to make it basic apologetics and also to choose a more imaginative approach to this issue, but let me just summarize the different approaches very quickly and then I'll go into each one for just a little bit.

You could put it up in terms of some mathematical equations. Reason minus faith equals rationalism, you could put it that way, or the more fashionable word now that's used is modernism. And then you have faith minus reason equals fideism, which is just faithism, so that essentially it's faith that's given apart from reason.

Maybe it's based upon your own experience, your own feeling. The more classical approach, I believe, is the faith plus reason equals C, the classical approach. And the final one is minus faith minus reason equals postmodernism.

Now they would certainly allow a kind of faith in reason, but no such, they would believe that there's no such thing as objective faith or objective reason that's true across the boards, across cultures, and throughout the world. So these are the four basic approaches and I want to quickly touch on each one of these to illustrate these ideas. And again, if you want a more philosophical approach to it, go to classical apologetics or the many other books that can help you do that.

First of all, with regard to rationalism or modernism, I want to use an illustration from C.S. Lewis's book, Pilgrim's Regress. Remember, this was the book that was written within two years after he came to saving faith and really alienated him from much of Oxford because he portrayed some of the characters in the intellectual formation of the West within that book in a fictionalized form and had questions raised about it. But I want to give you some illustrations of how he portrayed the modernists in a couple little vignettes.

Very soon along the way, John, who was coming from a land called Puritania, where there was a god called the Landlord and a book of rules, kind of a portrayal of the Bible, although certainly much much more than that, and a black hole being threatened, the idea of hell. And he is leaving to try to find the answers to questions. He'd seen a vision off in the distance of this beautiful island and he was on a quest to find this island.

And so he sets out on his journey and he meets these characters along the way. Well, one of the first characters that he met was Mr. Enlightenment, the personification of reason or of modernism. And here's the dialogue that goes on.

Mr. Enlightenment says, and where might you come from, my fine lad? From Puritania, sir, said John. A good place to leave, eh? John says, I'm glad you think that. I'm afraid, and Mr. Enlightenment cuts him off, I hope I'm a man of this world.

Any young fellow who's anxious to be better himself may depend on finding sympathy and support in me. Puritania, well, I suppose you've been brought up to be afraid of the Landlord. John, well, I must admit I sometimes do feel rather nervous.

Mr. Enlightenment, you may make your mind easy, my boy. There is no such person. There is no Landlord.

Mr. Enlightenment, there is absolutely no such thing. I might even say no such entity in existence. There never has been and there never will be.

And this is absolutely certain, cried John, for a great hope was arising in his heart. And I suppose that hope is related to he'd be free from any constraint within his life. Mr. Enlightenment, absolutely certain.

Look at me, young man. I ask you, do I look as if I was easily taken in? A little bit later, instead of going around in John's mind and kind of bursts out and said, but how do you know that there's no Landlord? Mr. Enlightenment says, Christopher Columbus, Galileo, the earth is round, the invention of printing, gunpowder, exclaimed Mr. Enlightenment in such a loud voice that the pony shied. I beg your pardon, said John.

Eh, said Mr. Enlightenment, I didn't quite understand, said John. A little bit later, he's thinking about it some more, and after hearing him speak about some of the different myths and stories out there in the world's religions, says, I think I see, John says. Most of the stories about the Landlord are probably untrue, therefore the rest are probably untrue.

Mr. Enlightenment, well, that's about as near as a beginner can get to it, perhaps. But when you've had scientific training, you'll find you can be quite certain about all sorts of things which now seem to you only probable. A little bit later, John says, I'm not really sure that I've understood all your arguments, sir.

Is it absolutely certain that there's no Landlord? He's kind of stuck with this idea. Mr. Enlightenment, absolutely, I give you my word of honor. And of course, you see the little thing that John, in this sort of Columbo style, is pushing towards Mr. Enlightenment, the certainty of his arguments.

And you see at the end here, I love this phrase, but when you've had scientific training, you find that you can be quite certain about all sorts of things which now seem to you only probable. And he's getting at the difficulty of the atheists really being able to make their case. We'll later come back and try to make a case for the existence of God through using argument.

But right now, I just want to stick with the difficulty of affirming the universal negative. Interesting phenomena is sometimes it's more difficult to prove the universal negative than it is the positive. The illustration I like to use is the gold in Alaska analogy.

Just think of the positive statement, there is gold in Alaska. How would you go about proving it? Just find one piece. And presumably, if there is any gold in Alaska, you'd find it a lot sooner than by proving the universal negative.

Because what would you have to do in order to prove that there is absolutely no gold in Alaska? Well, you have to decide what the borders of Alaska are, how deep Alaska goes, and dig up every square inch of Alaska. Because if there's one square inch you didn't dig up, you might find gold there. Now let's move that up to the existence of God.

What would you have to know in order to know that there is no God? Everything. Because if there's one thing you didn't know, that might be God. And we're so far from knowing everything that there is to be known, that it's an incredible and impossible thing to actually do that.

In fact, I had a friend, Jerry Root, who teaches at Wheaton College now. And when he was younger, he heard Madeleine Murray O'Hare, the famous atheist. She's famous for getting prayer outlawed in the public schools, part of that legal case that really led to that prohibition.

But one time she heard Ms. O'Hare speak, and she was a very dogmatic atheist in putting forth her position. And Jerry asked her this question. He said, Ms. O'Hare, how much of that which there is to be known do you think that you actually know? Would you say 10%? Of course, she laughed.

I said, okay, 10%. Of course, it's probably far, far less than 10%. But he said, well, do you think God could exist in 90% of the knowledge that you admit that you don't know? And according to his testimony, she stood silent for about a minute, you know, thinking, and said a qualified no, and moved on to another question without pursuing it.

So it's a really difficult thing to be able to say with certainty, to prove the non-existence of something. Now, I could say there are somehow inherent contradictions within the faith, or that kind of thing, or say that that is totally incoherent, and those options have been tried, and I think found wanting, and we'll address some of those objections as we go on later in the class. But nevertheless, it's a rather audacious claim to make the statement with dogmatic certainty, as some atheists do, that there is no God, or the similar statement that there are no absolutes.

(34:02 - 35:02)

And again, it does lead to more certainty than is possible by the claims that are being made. They often make up with bluff, or with intensity, or with emotional passion, that which they lack in evidence and argument. So that's a danger of rationalism or modernism.

You see that particularly, and we'll look at this more in later classes, in the new atheists, Harris, Hitchens, and Dawkins. They often come on very dogmatically, and with great sense

of certainty, very much like Mr. Enlightenment, but they don't have the evidence to back up their claims. At least, that's what I would say, and I'll try to prove that later on.

A second approach is the faith minus reason equals fideism. And there are various kinds of this, what I will call, fideism, and I don't have time to develop this in any kind of extensive way. Let me just mention a couple different approaches.

(35:03 - 42:56)

First is a kind of naked fideism, a faith without evidence. The way C.S. Lewis, as he speaks about this view, is that this approach is a belief immune from all assaults to reality. And another way you could put it is, it's praiseworthy to believe without evidence.

This is more of this naked fideism. You see that sometimes in American fundamentalism. They're almost anti-evidence.

They put a boast in just asserting their faith dogmatically, without any kind of backup present in it. But there is a more sophisticated kind of fideism, and I would put it this way. It's a don't persuade, proclaim view.

And I don't have time here to do justice to the sophistication of the arguments that are present. Just to mention a few of the proponents of this view. One is Cornelius van Til, in Classical Apologetics, a book I mentioned, does a very extensive look at his very sophisticated arguments and tries to show how we would find them wanting.

But his argument would go something along these lines. To submit God, or the Bible, to our autonomous reason is to put ourselves above God. And it would diminish certainty in a sense.

Put our argument based upon probable evidence, rather than on the certainty, he says, that can only come from the Holy Spirit. And I would have a lot to say about that, but I'm not going to try to say it right now. But he would feel he's in a better position to show somebody, if he's on a plane, a picture of your family and tell them the gospel.

Then understand, van Til used to go down in Philadelphia and stand up on a soapbox and preach the gospel. He loved to do that. He did sometimes engage in a kind of argument to try to show that even the foundational things that a non-believer holds to cannot be held to on the basis of their own philosophy.

And I appreciate his arguments along that line and I will be giving some of those as we go through this course. Another proponent of this don't persuade, proclaim approach is Karl Barth. He was anathema on the use of apologetics, and he would basically go and strongly preach the gospel.

For instance, he liked to go into prisons and just powerfully proclaim the truth of the gospel of Christ. But he didn't like at all using argument or philosophy in the interest of faith. Martin Lloyd-Jones is one of my heroes, and he had a whole strain throughout his teaching, even though I have the greatest respect for Martin Lloyd-Jones.

We have a knowing and doing article. I just did an article on him for the CS Lewis publication, Knowing and Doing. But he thought that apologetics denies or diminishes authority.

It can become complicated, misordinary people. It can omit the work of the Holy Spirit. And I would think that these are all possible abuses of apologetics, but an argument against abuse is not an argument against use.

I don't have time to go through the proper way to approach it and the way to avoid these uses. Just to mention that people have raised some legitimate criticisms to apologetics, I think can be answered along the way. Another form of fideism is what I would call don't-defend-dialogue.

And this is often held by people that are more liberal or relativistic with regard to truth, those that place a feeling at the foundation. One of the founders of modern liberal theology was Friedrich Schleiermacher, and he rooted everything within a feeling of absolute dependence, that all religion is based upon this feeling of absolute dependence. And your words, your articulations of the faith in your theology are just different ways of articulating this foundational experience that you've had.

And you could express your faith in this way or that way or the other way, and they all be true to the experience. There's no real objective revealed truth to your mind or to your reason. Cognitively, it's really rooted in your experience of things.

And this is behind at least some people in the don't-defend-dialogue school. Certainly, I believe in the importance of civil dialogue between people of different faiths that clarify what we believe and what we don't believe. There's a great place and importance for that.

But there are some that engage the dialogue with the idea that there's no truth to be found in the end, that it's just all a matter of your own perspective, your own preference, that there's nothing objective out there anyway, that we all just have a similar experience. They're just different ways up to the top of the mountain. That's often an assumption in some of these dialogues.

Now, C.S. Lewis deals with this in a more imaginative form in The Great Divorce. In The Great Divorce, he has a section where there's a bishop, an Anglican bishop, that's much like a Bishop Spong. You're surprised.

J.A.T. Robinson wrote a book in the sixties, Honest to God, that shocked people about how unbelieving a bishop could be. This is the picture that he has here in The Great Divorce. The bishop goes up on a bus from this shadowy, gray, almost fog-like town that we find out later is hell.

The bishop is in hell and goes up on the bus to the borders of heaven. Some of the inhabitants of heaven come out, and it provides a setting for a very interesting discussion between the inhabitants of hell and the inhabitants of heaven. Dick is a former parishioner of the bishop that had become more evangelical in his faith along the way.

Here's what the bishop says. He said, Ah, Dick, thou shalt never forget some of our talks. I expect you've changed your views a bit since then.

You became rather narrow-minded towards the end, but no doubt you've broadened out again. Dick, how do you mean? Bishop, well, it's obvious right now, isn't it, that you weren't quite right? Well, my dear boy, you're coming to believe in a literal heaven and a literal hell. Dick, but wasn't I right? Oh, in a spiritual sense, to be sure, says the bishop.

I believe in them in that way. I'm still, my dear boy, looking for the kingdom, but nothing superstitious or mythological. Dick, excuse me, where do you imagine that you've been? Bishop, I see.

You mean that the great town with its continual hope of morning? We must all live by hope, must we not? With its field for indefinite progress is, in a sense, heaven, if we only have the eyes to see it. That's a beautiful idea. Dick, I didn't mean that at all.

Is it possible you don't know where you've been? Bishop, now that you mention it, I don't think we ever do give it a name. What do you call it? Dick, we call it hell. Later, the bishop finds out that he's been in hell for apostasy, that is, denying the faith.

The bishop argues that no honest opinion can be a sin. He said, my views were not only honest but heroic, and I asserted them fearlessly. When the doctrine of the resurrection ceased to commend itself to the critical faculties which God had given me, I openly rejected it.

(42:57 - 58:45)

I preached my famous sermon. I defied the whole chapter. I took every risk.

What risk, Dick said? What was it all likely to come of it except what actually came? Popularity, sales for your books, invitations, and finally a bishopric. A little jab there. Later, Dick says, we're afraid of crude salvationism, afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age, afraid of ridicule, afraid above all of real spiritual fears and hopes.

Later, Dick asked the bishop to come to the mountains in heaven there, because in the mountains of heaven you'll find answers to the big questions. Bishop says, well, okay, that's a plan, but I'd like some assurances. He said, I want to kind of do it on my own terms.

Here's the way he puts it. Well, that's a plan. I'm perfectly ready to consider it.

Of course, I should require some assurances. I should want to guarantee that you're taking me to a place where I shall find a wider sphere of usefulness and the scope for the talents God has given me, an atmosphere of free inquiry, in short, all that one means by civilization and the spiritual life. No, said Dick, I can promise you none of these things.

No sphere of usefulness. You're not needed there at all. No scope for your talents, only forgiveness for having perverted them.

No atmosphere of inquiry, for I'll bring you to the land not of questions but of answers, and you will see the face of God. Later, Dick says, thirst was made for water and inquiry for truth. A little bit later, he also says, come and see.

I will bring you to eternal fact, the father of all other falsehood. Finally, in the very last scene, Bishop has to decide whether he's going to stay and go into heaven, go to the mountains, or leave and get back on the bus and go back to hell. The bishop nods his head and beams on Dick with a bright clerical smile, or the best approach to it with such unsubstantial lips could imagine, and then turning away, humming softly to himself, city of God, how broad and far.

He goes back to hell. C.S. Lewis was very much against this idea of relativism or compromising with the spirit of the age. He said, in a little phrase in God in the Dock, Jesus Christ did not say go into the world and tell the world it is quite right.

So he was the one who wanted to put forth the faith and really provide a defense of it. And that leads to the third perspective, the faith plus reason equals the more classical approach. One proponent of this is sometimes misunderstood is Augustine.

Let me just quickly give you a sketch of how Augustine viewed this idea. It might be helpful to us. He does make a statement that people exalt, and I suppose rightly so.

He says, I believe that I might understand, or in order that I might understand. And he did say that. People have taken that as a justification, say, for kind of fideistic approach within Augustine.

But when you look at it, look at his history, it's far from that. It has a context within his thinking. Augustine, for about 14 years, was involved in what you might call a cult or another religious sect called Manichaeanism.

And this held to a dualism, all good God and a sort of all evil God, and they were in great conflict in a very complex situation of practice involved with it. And Augustine was fascinated by all the philosophical turns of this movement. But he had a lot of questions, and the questions rose more and more over these 14 years.

And he was told, well, there's this guy by the name of Faustus, who's a great speaker and leader and philosopher in the movement. He'll be able to answer your questions. And when he got to Faustus, finally, he was impressed by his rhetoric, but he didn't have answers to Augustine's questions.

And it produced a crisis in Augustine's faith, and he actually lost his faith in Manichaeanism. And it's a very interesting process that really led to his coming to faith in Christ, and I won't tell you the whole story. But he did have to go back and go back to the drawing board and say this.

Well, there are many different claims out there of different religions, and many of them claim different authorities or scriptures that put forward their views. But which, if any, are true, and can we sort that out? So he used his reason to really test authority claims. He writes his great book City of God, and we see many arguments back and forth in these, and we see his various arguments against philosophical schools of his own time that he gives some of the results of his study there.

But he went back and really examined the foundations of his faith, and there's a sense in which his reason led him to the idea that the Bible was the Word of God and Christ was the

Son of God. And then, after you come to understand the scriptures using your reason to test the claims to authority, then once you come to read that Bible, you submit your whole being to that authority that you believe in order that you might understand. There might be some things, and there are some things in Scripture, that are beyond our understanding.

I don't think they're contradictions, but they're mysteries. They're things that go beyond our understanding. It's not surprising that there be so, that the revelation of an infinite God would contain mysteries.

But he said that you still need to submit yourself to it, even if you can't fully understand it, if you've come to believe, with good reason, that the Bible is the Word of God. So there was a certain role of reason prior to faith to establish authority, and then a great role of reason after faith to understand that authority and put your trust in things, some of which went beyond your full understanding. So you might put it this way, it's reasonable for faith to precede reason.

I'm not putting it very concisely, it's reasonable for faith to precede reason. There's a certain role again of faith prior to reason, a reason prior to faith, and a certain role of reason after faith. The way Lewis put his understanding of faith and reason is along these lines.

He said, I'm not asking anyone to accept Christianity if his best reasoning tells him that the weight of evidence is against it. Again, I'm not asking anyone to accept Christianity if his best reasoning tells him that the weight of evidence is against it. He felt that the weight of evidence is for it.

Or another place he put, the way he viewed the state of affairs, he said that he believed that there was probable evidence, enough probable evidence, for faith in Christ that led to a psychological exclusion of doubt, though not a logical exclusion of dispute. Let me say that again, enough probable evidence leading to a psychological exclusion of doubt, though not a logical exclusion of dispute. You can still dispute about some questions, but there was enough evidence that led you to have confidence within your faith, that led to a psychological exclusion of doubt.

But he did realize, even once you had that evidence, that didn't mean once for all that your faith was going to be settled, because there's doubt that comes from a lot of different sources. In fact, there's a book by Oz Guinness on doubt that has a chapter on seven different kinds of doubt, and only one of those comes from intellectual sources. Much of the doubt either comes from spiritual or emotional factors, so that it's very important as you talk to someone to realize that, again, an honest question deserves an honest answer.

But many of the different objections, it's important to discern that it might not even help if you give a long intellectual disquisition on the question that's given, if that's not the main problem. You really need to listen for a while and discern where the real source of the issue is, and a lot of it can come from emotion. Again, this would be worth going through those other six kinds of doubt in detail, but let me just mention that doubt that comes from emotions.

Here's the way C.S. Lewis puts it, supposing a man's reason once decides that the weight of evidence is for it. I can tell that man what's going to happen to him in the next few weeks, or

come a moment when he wants a woman, or wants to tell a lie, or feels very pleased with himself, or sees a chance of making a little money in some way that's not perfectly fair, some moment in which it would be convenient if Christianity were not true. These emotions will carry out a blitz.

I'm not talking of any moments at which real reasons against Christianity turn up. These have to be faced, and that's a different matter. I'm talking about moments where a mere mood rises up against it.

Now, faith, in the sense in which I'm here using the word, is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of its changing moods. For moods change, whatever view your reason takes. I remember once a young man was sent to me by his young life leader, who was in college here in the DC area, and he was having problems with his faith, great doubts, and we had two different sessions of a couple hours each where we sat down and talked about those doubts, and I think by the end of the second session he felt, to his satisfaction, that I had addressed the intellectual issues of the questions he was raising.

But I said at the end, you know, I don't think this is going to end your doubts, because a lot of the doubts you've had, I think, are coming more from emotional struggles. He'd had a horrific, sort of came out of a really ugly divorce and family situation. He'd had a number of different people that had hurt him deeply along the way, and he had trouble committing himself to anybody, much less committing himself to God, because he'd been let down in so many different situations.

So the problem was a lack of trust or a lack of emotional, there was this emotional impact in his life. So sometimes you have to go back and deal with the roots of the emotion. I recommended he see a counselor, which he said he would do.

I think that it's important when we deal with the struggles that we have, especially emotionally, not necessarily to know why we're going through the difficulties we're going through, but to know why we trust in the God who knows why. Let me just look at a little bit at the biblical perspective on it. All I can do is give a very quick sketch of this.

In Ephesians 4, verses 1 to 9, you have Moses. He's going to go down to the people of Israel. He says, I'm going to go down and tell them, let my people go, but are they going to believe me? And basically what God says, well, I'll give you some signs, some evidence to show that this is true.

And my point here is, does God expect us to believe without evidence? And so he gave him one sign where he throws his staff down on the ground, becomes a serpent, picks it up again, becomes a staff. Or he takes some water and pours it on the ground, it becomes blood. Or he puts his hand into his cloak and it becomes leprosy.

And these are objective signs or miracles that will show them that he's not just claiming on the basis of his experience when he was out in the wilderness and saw this bush burning and had God speak to him. I mean, that might cause a lot of skepticism on the part of his hearers about the nature of his sanity, but he had objective signs to show, evidence that he could give. Calvin, in speaking about this passage, says that evidence can be both the preparation for and the confirmation of faith.

Evidence can be both the preparation for and the confirmation of faith. In Judges, Gideon said, well, how do I know that this is you speaking? I mean, you asked me to go out and have 300 men against the army of, say, half a million Midianites. Is this really you? And the first time God says, well, set up this sacrifice on the rock, and God comes down with fire from heaven and consumes the sacrifice.

Now, that ought to satisfy anybody, I would think. But then he said, well, I'm not quite convinced yet. And he does the whole thing with the fleeces, you know, wet, dry, dry, wet kind of thing.

And God keeps giving him evidence, not that he praises him for his lack of belief, but he nevertheless kept giving evidence. Or Elijah, when the prophets of Baal, you have the passages there, 1st Kings 18, 21 to 24, and 36 to 39. And of course, the whole encounter is, which one is God? God, Yahweh, or Baal? And you know the whole story, so I'm not going to tell it.

It's basically, in the end, in verse 37, he says, but in order that you might know that Yahweh is the true God, he's the one who answers with fire from heaven. So here's evidence. It's not just trust in your own feelings.

Or Jesus, in Mark chapter 2, verses 1 to 12, says, in order that you might know that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins, I say, pick up your bed and walk. You might doubt whether I have this ability to forgive sins, but in order that you might know that's true, the invisible is confirmed by the visible. Well, I think in apologetics we have a dual task, and that is, 2nd Corinthians 10, verse 5, we're destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we're taking every thought captive to Christ.

That we're involved in two things. One, destroying speculations, looking at different philosophies, and this is what we're going to be doing in this class. Looking, say, at materialism, the claim that all is matter, or pantheism, that all is spirit, or various theisms that claim that there's matter and there is spirit, and looking at evaluating each one of these different approaches, and to look at these other philosophies.

And so that's the first task, a more negative and critical task. Then the positive task is the second part of that verse, to take every thought captive to Christ, to put together a positive case for Christ and for faith. I think that it's important in the end that we sit back and evaluate these things and sort through them.

And then the last one that we're going to deal with next time is to look at postmodernism, the minus faith minus reason equals postmodernism. Let's close with the word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for this time when we can come away and think about these thoughts, think about what it takes to be able to approach the culture that we're part of, and I pray you might use these thoughts