

Defending Oneself Without Getting Defensive

Acts 24:10-21

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-10-2009

Introduction

There was an old joke up in Canada that unfortunately has transmogrified into an urban legend purporting to be true. It's a good joke (at least if you are a Canadian, whose military is an embarrassment), but it's been pawned off as true so many times that the US Navy has posted a notice that it is false. Here's the story, as posted on our Navy's website.

Believe it or not [any time I read those words, I know to check the story out at Snopes. Anyway, going on – “Believe it or not”]...this is the transcript of an actual radio conversation between a US naval ship and Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October 1995. The Radio conversation was released by the Chief of Naval Operations on Oct. 10, 1995. [And of course, this is impossible because the ship referenced was decommissioned and scrapped in 1993. But here's the supposed transcript]

US Ship: Please divert your course 0.5 degrees to the south to avoid a collision.

CND reply: Recommend you divert **your** course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

US Ship: This is the Captain of a US Navy Ship. I say again, divert **your** course.

CND reply: No. I say again, you divert **YOUR** course!

US Ship: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS CORAL SEA*, WE ARE A LARGE WARSHIP OF THE US NAVY. DIVERT YOUR COURSE NOW!!

CND reply: This is a lighthouse. Your call.

The Canadian Navy loves this joke because they are defensive about their lack of a significant Navy. But it is a story that has the ring of truth to it simply because of how universal pride and defensiveness are. People don't want to back down even when they know that they are in the wrong. If they are criticized, they get angry and defensive. On the other hand, some people go to the other extreme and act like doormats. They just let themselves get pushed around. Neither one is a Biblical balance.

Defending yourself is a Biblical responsibility; being defensive is a sin. There is a world of difference between the two. Defending yourself is a Biblical responsibility; being defensive is a sin. The first flows from stewardship and is required by God; the second flows from pride and is resisted by God. There is no place in the bible for passivism. We are commanded to defend ourselves. In fact, we are even commanded to defend our reputations. Proverbs 22:1 says, “**A good name is to be chosen rather**

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than great riches.” So there is no place for passivism. But neither is there a place for defending one’s pride. We must learn to defend the things that God calls us to defend, and refuse to defend the things that God calls us to crucify.

So today’s sermon is: “Defending Oneself Without Getting Defensive.” How do we maintain that balance? We are going to go through this passage three times so that you can see that balance. The first time we are going to look at Paul’s attitudes. The second time we are going to look at his methods. And then finally we are going to look at his aggressive defense. But in all of this, Paul shows remarkable self-control, and remarkable lack of defensiveness – especially in light of the lies that Tertullus has just uttered.

I. Paul’s attitude

A. *Cheerful (v. 10)*

First of all, Paul’s attitude. Verse 10 says, “**Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: ‘Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself.’**” I looked up the word “cheerful,” because I was skeptical about the translation. But the dictionary does indeed define it as cheerful. That’s all it means – cheerful, having good spirits, full of life, filled with cheer.

First of all, is it even possible to be cheerful when everyone is gunning for you? Yes it is. Many of you will remember that this was one of the things that made even Ronald Reagan’s bitterest opponents like him. He was hard not to like. To this day I remember his cheerful smile as he would jokingly answer the slanders that people brought against him. More than once I stood in amazement at his cheerfulness, because I was seething inside. I thought, “This is not right!” And I remember thinking that he was far more mature in this area than I was. Just as an example, he was repeatedly criticized for being too old when he was running for his second term. He was 73 old, and the media constantly painted how scary that was - the dangers of heart attack, senility, and other aging factors. And they really laid it in thick about the senility factor after a rather poor debate with Mondale. One reporter asked the question in rather blunt fashion, and he looked earnestly at her and said, with a hint of a smile, “I want you to know that also I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent’s youth and inexperience.” The audience erupted into laughter, and even Mondale chuckled. He was able to sometimes disarm people with his cheerfulness.

And some of his greatest, most memorable lines (which are quotable quotes to this day) came in spontaneous response to personal attacks. Yes it is possible to have a cheerful spirit when you are being attacked without in any way giving up the responsibility to defend yourself. Reagan did a tremendous job of making his opponents look petty in their attacks, and he taught people his philosophy in the process. And he made them laugh. Here are some of my favorite one-liners that Reagan gave:

1. "Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it."
2. "Communism works only in heaven, where they don't need it, and in hell, where they've already got it." That was in June, 1983.
3. When being criticized for being prolife he once said, "I've noticed all those in favor of abortion are already born."
4. When being criticized for lack of government compassion, he said, "There's a clear cause and effect here that is as neat and predictable as a law of physics: As government expands, liberty contracts." He was great at these one-liners.
5. One time he said, "I have wondered at times about what the Ten Commandment's would have looked like if Moses had run them through the U.S. Congress."

Now I'm not saying that Reagan didn't blow his cool from time to time. Paul did too. But I am saying that Reagan is at least one example of the ability to be cheerful yet firm in your defense.

How can we do that? Well, if you are convinced of God's sovereignty, then you can relax a bit, knowing that God is in control of the situation and that everything is working together for your good. James Strock's book on leadership quotes Reagan as saying, "that God has a plan for everyone and that seemingly random twists of fate are all part of His plan... in the end, everything worked out for the best." But there are other factors that can help. If you believe in Postmillennialism, you have even more reason to be cheerful because you know that truth will eventually triumph. If you believe in total depravity you can be cheerful because such negative smear campaigns as these Sadducees were engaging in will not take you by surprise. If you believe in God's grace you can be cheerful because you know that God's grace is greater than your sins or the sins of others. It's a matter of perspective. But it's more than perspective - if you are filled with the Spirit you can be cheerful because you are experiencing the reality of what you believe. But being cheerful is a powerful ally. One of my favorite

books on leadership is *Reagan on Leadership*. In that book, James Strock said, “Reagan ... remained invincibly genial.”¹

B. The ability to not be fazed by criticism (vv. 10-21)

The second thing I see in Paul was the ability to not be fazed by criticism. This is related to point A, but slightly different. This is the ability to not give up when you are slandered. Some people will retreat as soon as there are personal attacks. They don't like to be attacked. How does? But they retreat. This is another thing I appreciated about Reagan. Pete Wilson said that Reagan “was able to take a punch.”² The only times when Reagan really got mad was when his family was attacked. But his personal pride was usually not an issue. He was usually unfazed by personal criticism. And this spells another difference between defending yourself and being defensive. Defending yourself can be all about truth and justice, while being defensive is almost always only about saving your pride.

C. Forceful (vv. 11-13)

Of course, this did not make Paul a pansy or a doormat. He was quite forceful in his defense. Verses 11-13

Acts 24:11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

Acts 24:12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

Acts 24:13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

On occasion being forceful can irritate others. I'm sure Paul irritated these Sadducees. But sometimes it is necessary. In Denver a single agent was trying her hardest to rebook passengers from a cancelled airline flight. There was a long line, and one angry passenger walked up to the front, cut in line much to the frustration and the protests of several people. But he demanded that he get rebooked. He said, “I have to be on this flight, and it has to be first class.” To which she responded, “I'm sorry, sir, I'll be happy to help you, but I have to take care of these folks first.” The passenger said. “Do you have any idea who I am?” Without hesitating, the agent smiled and picked up her public-address microphone and said, “May I have your attention, please? We have a passenger here at the gate who does not know who he is. If anyone can help him find his identity, please come to the gate.” The people who had been watching this burst into applause because they knew

¹ James M. Strock, *Reagan on Leadership* (Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1998), p. 211.

² As quoted by Strock, *Ibid.*, p. 211.

this guy was being a jerk. She knew she needed to be forceful of it wouldn't just be this guy that was mad. Paul here is not being pushed around. He is polite, but he is forceful.

D. Believing God's Word completely – being bold and unashamed of the Bible (v. 14)

Another thing that helped him not be defensive is given in verse 14

Acts 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

That takes boldness to say that to a pagan. Too many times Christians get shamed out of professing their faith because of ridicule in the public arena. People ask, "Oh, you're one of those people who believes the Bible. So do you believe in stoning kids and nuking gays?" They misrepresent Christianity, but they achieve their purpose because the Christians back off and deny they believe such controversial things. That's being defensive. It has nothing to do with defending yourself, defending truth or defending God's glory. And has everything to do with defending your pride and not looking foolish in the eyes of the world. You will never defend your Christian position properly if you are not proud of every portion of the Word of God. If there is any portion you are embarrassed by, you will lose the debate with the humanists. Why? Because you are not consistent. They can tell you are not defending the truth – you are defending your pride.

I love the responses that Doug Wilson gave in his debate with the atheist Dan Barker. And he had every opportunity to be defensive, but he wasn't. Barker objected that God could not exist, or if He did exist, He could not be the God of the Bible because He would be a cruel, immoral God. Let me quote him. I got this off of an mp3 recording of the debate. He said, "This supposedly all-knowing, all-caring God...doesn't exist... If He doesn't care about human suffering he is not a good God.... The God of the Bible appears to be quite the cruel character. The God of the Bible committed mass genocide... Kill all the children... And you will be very happy; this is what the God of the bible says. You will be very happy if you take the little babies and dash them against a stone. Psalm 137 says that. ... One of the most cruel, abhorrent examples of immorality that I can even imagine. I wouldn't want a creature like that living in the same neighborhood with me. If he does exist he is cruel. But since you require by definition that the God of Scripture is a good God, then that God cannot by definition exist." So that was the atheist's attack. Sounds pretty

embarrassing doesn't it? Would you have gotten defensive? He threw in a couple of other objections to slavery, marrying captives, etc. that I won't get into.

Wilson asked him: "I would like to ask first if you have an objection to what God said in the Psalms ... to take the babies and dash them against the rock." Dan Barker said, "Yes I do. It is wrong. It was wrong on objective moral principles."

Wilson then asked, "So it is wrong to take a baby's life for any reason?" [As he hesitated, and the audience caught the point, there was applause. Wilson scored because Barker was being inconsistent – Barker believes in abortion, which is a torturous tearing apart of little babies in the womb. Anyway, Barker replied,] "It is wrong to take a baby in your hands and pick it up and throw it against a rock...." Wilson asked, "What if President Clinton approved it?" After stuttering a bit, Barker said, "Well then, that would be wrong, of course. Yes." Wilson asked, "...If you take the same baby and put it in the womb, is there an objective moral objection to taking the life of an infant." Barker got irritated and asked, "Are we getting into abortion tonight?" Wilson said, "You were objecting to God being prochoice. You introduced the subject. You are saying that God can't take an innocent life, but we can."

When Barker asked, "So you are saying that was good?" Wilson gave a great testimony to the fact that he believed everything in the bible, and that you don't have a moral basis to stand on for any ethical issues if you reject the Bible. God is the definition of goodness, so that all God commands are good. We cannot be embarrassed by anything in the bible or we have lost the debate. If Wilson had become defensive out of embarrassment, he would have lost the debate. As it was, I think he did a great job. He didn't get into the real interpretation of Psalm 137 (which has nothing to do with believers dashing babies against a rock). But he didn't need to get into that. Are you willing to believe the whole Bible?

E. A man of hope and vision (v. 15)

But in verse 15 Paul goes on to say that he is a man of hope and vision.

Acts 24:15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust.

He knew that all of history was moving toward a final conclusion, and this hope drove him in the things he did for the present. I want you to notice that

this was a postmillennial hope. He only saw one resurrection future to him, not two or three. It is “a resurrection of the dead”, and that one resurrection contains both the just and the unjust. That’s postmillennialism – that Christ will come back and raise the dead after the millennium or “post” the millennium. When I finally understood the postmillennial hope of Charles Spurgeon, William Carey, David Livingston, and other greats from the past, it revolutionized my thinking. It’s one of the prongs in the mighty triad of Reformed thinking: Along with Presuppositional apologetics and God’s Biblical Blueprints, Postmillennialism was one of the things that enabled me to stop being defensive, and to have confidence that our labors in the Lord are not in vain. It’s just hinted at here, but I think it was one of those things that gave him this confidence. Let me repeat those three again: they are postmillennial (optimistic) eschatology, Biblical law (which is a comprehensive replacement for humanism), and Presuppositional (or some people call it Biblical) apologetics. If you have those three, you have a powerful defense of the faith.

F. A clear conscience (v. 16)

The sixth attitude of Paul that made a difference was a clear conscience. Verse 16:

Acts 24:16 This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

A guilty conscience makes people reactive rather than proactive. It robs people of faith by making them focus on the negative. It makes people critical of others, but unable to show any internal transformation themselves. A guilty conscience robs us of God’s power, His peace, His joy, and His victory. So this is another essential ingredient. Notice that he didn’t say that he was perfect. He said that he always strove to have a conscience without offense. This meant that the moment sin was pointed out in his life, he would confess it and get rid of it. He wasn’t about defending pride or image. He was about walking in the light and dialing having his conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Let me give an illustration of what a difference this makes: Rodney Buchanan told about a member of his congregation who was being attacked at a family gathering for something that she had done. And some of her relatives started criticizing her not only for that action, but also for all of other things that she had done wrong over the past many years. You’ve probably heard it – “You always do such and such.” Her response was not to get defensive, or to deny any wrongdoing, or to fire back accusations.

Instead, she said, “You know, I am glad you brought that up. I have been feeling badly about some of those things for a long time. I need to ask you to forgive me.” They weren’t expecting that! It completely took the wind out of their sails and opened up relationship between them. Her security in God’s grace enabled her to not be defensive. If you are justifying sin in your life you are not going to be in a place where you have this biblical balance.

G. Generous – not cynical (v. 17)

Paul also had a generous heart. Look at verse 17:

Acts 24:17 ¶ “Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation,

Think about that: His nation has done him nothing but harm, yet he continues to be generous-hearted toward them. After you have been burned a few times, it is easy to become cynical, but Paul did not. And Paul’s generosity in contrast to the attitudes of his accusers made an impression upon Felix. Don’t get cynical. It will make you just like your opponents. Continue to be generous, and your accusers will have less and less that they can say against you.

H. Factual (vv. 17-18)

Next, Paul was factual. He didn’t exaggerate, but he realized that the truth needed to be told. Verses 17-18

Acts 24:17 ¶ “Now after many years [In other words, he wasn’t a revolutionary in Jerusalem. He hadn’t even been there for many years. “after many years”] I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation,

Acts 24:18 in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.

Felix would not have gotten that from the Jerusalem Post. He needs to be informed. And our public officials today need to be informed about the facts. Don’t assume that they already know everything. The liberal media doesn’t tell people everything. Thankfully there are lots of Internet news outlets that aren’t controlled by the Liberals. You can still get hold of the facts if you are careful. But don’t allow the fact that you are being attacked to make you withhold truth, exaggerate the facts, or give up on expressing the facts. People may not believe them, but you tell them the truth anyway. Why? Because we don’t believe in using manipulation to win – we believe in the truth. So for Paul, presenting truth was more important than winning.

I. On the offense – don't let others off the hook through defensiveness (vv. 19-20)

Next, Paul didn't just *defend* himself. He went on the *offense* and made clear that these people are clogging up the courts with a frivolous lawsuit. They are not following protocol. They are guilty of perjury. Verses 19-20.

Acts 24:19 They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

Acts 24:20 Or else let those who are *here* themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,

What Paul is doing is really interesting. Paul invites Ananias or any of these elders testify, which would put them at the disadvantage of being cross-examined and subject to penalties for perjury. Ananias significantly refuses to testify for himself. He lets Tertullus be his spokesperson. That's telling. It makes the Sadducees argument look weak when they are not willing to testify. But this comes because Paul is willing to go on the offense.

J. Clarity of thinking – he doesn't get buffaloed away from what the real issues are (v. 21)

The last attitude of Paul was clarity of thinking. In verse 21 he brings things back to where the real source of disagreement is – the Sadducees were liberals who didn't believe in the resurrection. That's why they are mad at him. They are liberals. They are the proverbial king who has no clothes. Verse 21:

Acts 24:21 unless *it is* for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' "

This was the only thing they could prove. This was the fundamental disagreement. They were liberals who didn't believe the Bible. And it showed what a sham their charges of blasphemy really were. Paul was clear thinking. He didn't get buffaloed into arguing endlessly about tangential issues. He kept bringing it back to the heart of the matter.

So those were the crucial attitudes that enabled Paul to defend himself without being defensive. I think Roman numeral # I is the heart of this sermon. We could really quit here, because you can have the right methods and great answers, but if your attitudes are not captured by God's grace, you will be at a tremendous disadvantage. If your adversaries can get you mad, you will likely say something you regret. If they can divert you into

defending your pride, you have lost the battle. What we are really defending is God's honor, His truth, His property, and His goals. All that we have belongs to God, and when we are clear on that, we are prepared to defend ourselves without becoming defensive.

II. Paul's method

A. He followed protocol (v. 10a). He also was willing to acknowledge the jurisdiction of a Roman court and to answer charges (v. 10b), but he did not automatically accept jurisdiction of all courts (see 25:9-12)

I won't spend much time on Paul's method and Paul's answers, even though they are fascinating in their own right. But let me quickly highlight them for you. In verse 10 Paul is sensitive to court protocol. He doesn't act like a jerk. He doesn't get outraged at Tertullus' lies and object. He waits. Verse 10 says,

“Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: ‘Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself.’”

Paul lets the judge be judge. He is polite. He is adversarial with his accusers, but not with the judge. He acknowledges the jurisdiction of the court over the kinds of accusations that Ananias brought, but he pleads not guilty. To the charge of blasphemy, he later claims they have no jurisdiction. But he is careful to follow proper protocol throughout.

B. He categorically denies each charge – pleads not guilty (vv. 11-21)

Then in verses 11-21 he categorically denies each charge. It's interesting that though they have no jurisdiction over the real issue – the doctrinal dispute on the resurrection, Paul is willing to acknowledge jurisdiction on charges such as the crimes Tertullus accuses him of. He doesn't claim to be a sovereign individual. That wouldn't go over too well with Felix. He operates within both the *de jure* and the *de facto*. And the *de facto* was before him there, not the *de jure*. So what does he do? He pleads not guilty. If we are so focused on defending our rights that we totally ignore *the court system*, we will be at a disadvantage. He works within the system even though there were problems in the system. And I think we need to learn from that.

C. He insists that they prove their charges with the real witnesses and evidence (vv. 13,19-21)

He then insists that they prove their charges with *real* witnesses and with *real* evidence. Tertullus was not even present at the riot. He's not a witness. Nor were Ananias and the elders present. Where are the witnesses!?? That's what Paul wants to know. Significantly, they had not brought any witnesses with them. They were simply hoping that Felix would transfer jurisdiction to them.

But Paul catches them in a dilemma. And I love this - If Tertullus' charges are true, then Felix may not transfer jurisdiction because Tertullus has accused Paul of more than attempted defilement of the temple. That was a pretty weak charge, so he throws in more charges. If you remember from last week, Tertullus also accused Paul of insurrection against Rome. If those charges are true, then Felix can't transfer Paul. But if the charges are not true, and this is simply a doctrinal dispute, then they are in trouble for bringing false charges. Paul presses this point home. Look at verse 13:

Acts 24:13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

Verses 19-20

Acts 24:19 They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

Acts 24:20 Or else let those who are *here* themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,

He is saying that these guys didn't witness the riot, but neither did they witness anything in court that they can testify to unless they are willing to make the charge that I believe the Bible and they don't. Verse 21:

Acts 24:21 unless *it is* for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' "

The onus was not on Paul to prove his innocence. They are the ones who brought the charges, they are the ones who need to be able to demonstrate that. Too many people try to prove their innocence. That can be an endless state of affairs. When a Social Services agent shows up at your doorstep and wants you to prove your innocence of an anonymous charge, you need to know that they are going beyond the law. Ask them for their warrant. To get a warrant, you've got to get a judge to think there is evidence. And you need to get your lawyer on the phone. But make them prove their point. Don't give in. That's why the Bible assumes you are innocent until you can be proven guilty. It's very difficult to prove your innocence. That's not the purpose of court. The purpose of the prosecution is to prove someone's guilt.

The accused is innocent until proven guilty (unless you are in a third world court). The burden of proof is upon the accusers. To get sucked into trying to prove your innocence is a bad deal.

D. He ends by pointing out that the real issue is theological and not subject to either court jurisdiction (v. 21).

Then as I mentioned earlier, in verse 21 he ends by pointing out that the real issue is theological and not subject to either court jurisdiction. It should be thrown out of court.

When you are under attack, it is easy to let people lead you away from the real issues and to start defending yourself on stuff you hadn't even intended to do. Cults are notorious for this. This is what happens with husbands and wives sometimes. They have a disagreement on one issue, and before you know it, all kinds of other issues are brought up and they are arguing about things that have no bearing, and they never get back to the real issue. Those other accusations are just smoke screens to divert and to take your eyes off of the real issues. This is a great debaters trick. People will throw out bait to get you arguing about something that is interesting (but is harder to defend), and is not at the heart of what the disagreement is all about. So Paul's methods were not defensive. And I think we can learn a lot from his methods.

III. Paul's answer

A. Defense against the charge (see v. 5) of sedition (vv. 11-13)

1. Not enough time for sedition (v. 11)

Then finally, Paul's *answers* were not defensive. But they were a great defense. In verse 5 Tertullus had given the charge of sedition and creating an uprising. Paul's answer is threefold. Verse 11 gives his first answer:

Acts 24:11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

From the evidence that Lysias had introduced into the court, it is clear that Paul came to Jerusalem just like any other pilgrim did – to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. Why was he in the temple?!! Well, for obvious reasons – it was Pentecost twelve ago. He invites Felix to ask the Sanhedrin when they first saw him in Jerusalem. Again, he is trying to get them to take the stand, which will expose their lies. He would love to have them take the witness stand.

2. He was worshipping in the temple, not creating trouble (v. 12)

His second answer is given in verse 12:

Acts 24:12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

Paul had avoided making public appearances. He had only gone into the temple at the advice of the church elders to purify himself. Nothing he did should have aroused any suspicion. And if this trial goes on, Paul can subpoena witnesses who can testify on his behalf. He created no disturbance. The Jews did.

3. Their accusations are totally groundless (v. 13)

The third part of his answer is given in verse 13:

Acts 24:13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

He is saying that their charges are totally groundless. You see, a charge by itself is not sufficient to prove guilt. Yet how many times do we assume someone guilty because we have seen a charge on the web, or heard a charge from a friend, or the newspaper has reported that the government has charged someone, or because we have listened to a charge through gossip? Paul's argument shows how we ought not to believe an evil report without checking all the sides. So that is a great answer to the first charge. In any court of law it ought to be enough.

B. Defense against the charge (see v. 5b) of being a new religion (vv. 14-16)

1. He admits that he is a Christian (v. 14)

The second charge given in verse 5 was that Paul is the ringleader of a new religion that is a cult and thus not licensed by Rome. Paul bypasses the whole issue of licensing. And he was wise in doing that. He first of all admits that he is who they say he is – a Christian. **“But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers.”** Yes, I am part of what they call a sect. He does not deny the faith. But he does *not* admit that it is a new religion.

2. There is only one way, though they call it a sect (v. 14a)

He says that Christianity is “The Way.” That expression implies that he holds to the one and only way that has always been the way. He does not admit to being a cult. He does not admit to being new. He does not admit to

being “the Nazarenes” unless it is understood that they are the historic faith. He admits to being first of all, a part of the way.

3. My religion is the historical faith (v. 14b)

He admits next to holding to the historic faith. “**I worship the God of my fathers.**” The implication is that it is the Sadducees who have abandoned the faith, not Paul. It is the liberals who were the cult, not Paul. Homosexuals try to make us out to be the weird ones who are deviating from a standard. But we need to tirelessly say that we are part of the historic faith and the historic position in American society.

4. I believe the whole Bible (v. 14c)

Point 4 buttresses this by saying, “**believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.**” I really ought to preach an entire sermon on this verse sometime. Paul was claiming to be a theonomist. But he was also claiming that Christianity is not a new religion. It is the religion of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. People who calls themselves New Testament Christians are admitting to the charge of the Sadducees that they are a new cult; a new religion. Claiming that you only follow the New Testament is to apostatize from the faith of the fathers and to establish yourself as a cult. It is imperative that Christians affirm that Christianity is not a new religion. Sadducees and Pharisees would like you to believe that. Liberals would like you to believe that. Dispensationalists might like you to believe that. But there is only one Lord, one faith, one body, one bride, one temple, one olive tree, and one vineyard. Romans 4:1,12,16 say that Abraham is the father of our faith. It’s the same faith. Like Paul we need to be able to testify, “**believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.**” Can you honestly say that? “I believe all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.” If you want to follow Paul, you better be able to say that.

5. I believe in the resurrection (v. 15)

Paul then said that he believed in the resurrection. This too was the historic faith. It was the Sadducees who formed the new religion. Verse 15 says, “**I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept** [that is, the father’s also accept. The Sadducees didn’t. But the fathers did], **that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.**” Full Preterists cannot make this statement. They are not part of the Way. They cannot claim the faith of the fathers. Orthodox Christianity has always

affirmed a future resurrection of all the just and the unjust – a literal resurrection, just as the ancient Jewish fathers did.

6. My conscience is totally clear (v. 16)

And in verse 16 he affirms that his conscience is completely clear on this issue of being a new religion. Oh, that modern Christians could say that! They have abandoned the faith of the Old Testament. Oh, that everyone could have a clear conscience over this issue of not having abandoned the old paths.

C. Defense against the charge (see v. 6) of sacrilege (vv. 17-21)

1. He was bringing alms to Israel (v. 17)

But let's quickly look at Paul's defense against the charge of sacrilege against the temple. He did not bring a Gentile into the temple. He was bringing alms to the nation (verse 17), was fulfilling a Nazarite vow (verse 18), was not doing anything to upset temple protocol while in the temple (v. 18), he points out that they have not brought one shred of proof to this courtroom of any charges (verses 19-20) and finally, he reiterates what the hatred for him is really over – they are liberals who don't believe in the resurrection (verse 21). They are liberals who don't believe the Bible. That's why they are bringing this case.

1. He was fulfilling a Nazarite vow (v. 18)

2. He was not inciting anything to upset temple protocol (v. 18)

3. They have no proof of sacrilege (vv. 19-20)

4. What this trial is really about is the resurrection (v. 21)

Conclusion

I think you can see that the best defense is a good offense. But we will never be able to have a good offense unless we are willing to embrace the attitudes of Paul, the methods of Paul, and the answers of Paul. May we never be ashamed of the message of Scripture! May it be our joy! And as we boldly give an answer of the hope that lies within us, may we do so with the boldness that comes from Paul's presuppositionalism, Paul's embracing of the whole Bible, and Paul's postmillennialism. Amen.

Defending Oneself Without Getting Defensive

Acts 24:10-21

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-10-2009

Introduction

- I. Paul's attitude
 - A. Cheerful (v. 10)
 - B. The ability to not be fazed by criticism (vv. 10-21)
 - C. Forceful (vv. 11-13)
 - D. Believing God's Word completely – being bold and unashamed of the Bible (v. 14)
 - E. A man of hope and vision (v. 15)
 - F. A clear conscience (v. 16)
 - G. Generous – not cynical (v. 17)
 - H. Factual (vv. 17-18)
 - I. On the offense – don't let others off the hook through defensiveness (vv. 19-20)
 - J. Clarity of thinking – he doesn't get buffaloed away from what the real issues are (v. 21)
- II. Paul's method
 - A. He followed protocol (v. 10a). He also was willing to acknowledge the jurisdiction of a Roman court and to answer charges (v. 10b), but he did not automatically accept jurisdiction of all courts (see 25:9-12)
 - B. He categorically denies each charge – pleads not guilty (vv. 11-21)
 - C. He insists that they prove their charges with the real witnesses and evidence (vv. 13,19-21)
 - D. He ends by pointing out that the real issue is theological and not subject to either court jurisdiction (v. 21).
- III. Paul's answer
 - A. Defense against the charge (see v. 5) of sedition (vv. 11-13)
 - 1. Not enough time for sedition (v. 11)
 - 2. He was worshipping in the temple, not creating trouble (v. 12)
 - 3. Their accusations are totally groundless (v. 13)
 - B. Defense against the charge (see v. 5b) of being a new religion (vv. 14-16)
 - 1. He admits that he is a Christian (v. 14)
 - 2. There is only one way, though they call it a sect (v. 14a)
 - 3. My religion is the historical faith (v. 14b)
 - 4. I believe the whole Bible (v. 14c)
 - 5. I believe in the resurrection (v. 15)
 - 6. My conscience is totally clear (v. 16)
 - C. Defense against the charge (see v. 6) of sacrilege (vv. 17-21)
 - 1. He was bringing alms to Israel (v. 17)
 - 1. He was fulfilling a Nazarite vow (v. 18)
 - 2. He was not inciting anything to upset temple protocol (v. 18)
 - 3. They have no proof of sacrilege (vv. 19-20)
 - 4. What this trial is really about is the resurrection (v. 21)

Conclusion