

The Truth – Pt. 2 – Characteristics and Practical Applications

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to conclude our study of what the Bible has to say about **the truth**.
2. This is an important study because God's word has a lot to say about the truth, which means that we as seekers of God should want to know about **the truth**.
3. In last week's lesson we talked about:
 - A. The importance of the truth shown by how:
 - i. The **Holy Spirit's work** was focused on revealing the truth (Jn. 16:13-14).
 - ii. The truth was **important to the apostles** (3 John 4).
 - iii. The truth **makes us free** (John 8:31-32).
 - iv. We are **sanctified by the truth** (John 17:17, 19).
 - v. Anything but the truth **is a lie** (Rom. 1:24-25).
 - vi. **Acceptable worship** is conducted in truth (John 4:24).
 - vii. **Approval** before God is based on **truth** (2 Tim. 2:15)
 - viii. Truth can and will affect my salvation (2 Pet. 3:15-16).
 - B. Finally, we looked at how the truth is **God's word** and how it is **for everyone** and is the only way to know the truth concerning the things of God and salvation (Jn. 17:17; 8:31-32).
4. Today I want to consider some important characteristics of the truth and some practical applications that God presents and would have us make in our use of the truth.

BODY:

I. The truth will always be consistent—it will not contradict itself.

- A. We know this because the **sum**, or **all**, of God's word is **true** (Psa. 119:160 – “The **sum of Your word is truth**, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.”).
 1. Since all of God's word is **the truth**, it cannot **contradict itself**. For, contradictions are one of the main ways we determine that something said or reported is false!
 2. Though some do believe the Bible teaches “contradictory truths,” or truth you cannot harmonize, and pass it off as the “mystery of God,” this approach is in error.
- B. Jesus himself showed that accepting all God's word as truth and **harmonizing** it is vital to our understanding of it (Mk. 12:36-37 – “And Jesus began to say, as He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that **the Christ is the son of David**? ³⁶ David himself said **in the Holy Spirit**, ‘The Lord said to **my Lord**, “**Sit at My right hand**, until I put your enemies beneath Your feet.”’ ³⁷ **David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?**” And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.”).
 1. **Jesus pointed out how the truth said...**
 - a. While David **ruled Israel** he recognized the Messiah **who was in heaven** as **his Lord** (Psa. 110:1).
 - b. Yet, the truth also reveals that the Messiah was to be **David's Son**, or **of His lineage** when He came to save the world (Isa. 11; 2 Sam. 7:12-17).
 2. So, what was Jesus' point?
 - a. Because **both are the truth, they must be harmonized** to have the truth.
 - b. Thus, the Messiah was both **God** (as David's Lord in Heaven) and **man** (as David's son).
 - c. And, because the Pharisees failed to harmonize these passages, they rejected, as did most of the Jews, the very Messiah of which these passages prophesied!
 3. So, the truth is consistent. It must always harmonize, or we are using it incorrectly.

II. All that God's word says on a subject is the truth on that subject! (Psa. 119:160 – “The **sum of Your word is truth...”).**

- A. In other words, it is wrong to assume one has the truth based on the teaching of one or a few verses of Scripture when there are other scriptures that also address that subject.
- B. Example: Jesus said “**Ask, and it will be given to you**; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” ⁸ For **everyone who asks receives**, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” (Matt. 7:7-8).

1. Based on this scripture I might think it true that **all that is required** to receive something from God **is to ask**. And **receiving it is guaranteed**, seeing “everyone who asks receives.”
 2. But that would be in error because God’s word has more to say on the subject (1 Jn. 5:14-15 – “This is the **confidence** which we have before Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us**.¹⁵ And **if we know that He hears us** in whatever we ask, **we know that we have the requests** which we have asked from Him.”).
 3. So, our confidence in receiving anything from the Lord, and we can be confident, is found in asking for things that are according to His will!
- C. If I fail to consider all that God has to say about a subject, the conclusion(s) I reach on that subject will most likely be incomplete, and therefore wrong!

III. The truth is restrictive.

- A. Many people teach that the truth God has revealed should be **believed** and **followed**, but that **we are not restricted** in our service to God to only what has been revealed.
1. This is most often expressed in the words: “The Bible does not say ‘not to.’”
 2. So, many believe that unless the Scriptures condemn something, that something can be done in the name of the Lord.
 3. For example, people believe:
 - a. We must **sing** as the truth reveals, but we can also **play on a mechanical instrument** in worship, which the truth from Christ by the Spirit says nothing about (but in their mind does not condemn).
 - b. The local church must **preach** the gospel, **edify** itself, etc., as the truth says, but it can also **provide all sorts of recreation and entertainment** for its members and the world which the truth says nothing about (but in their mind does not condemn).
- B. This view, however, ignores the fact that **we cannot know the truth** about salvation, acceptable service to God, the work of the church, etc., **without the Spirit having revealed it through the apostles** (1 Cor. 2:11-13 – “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so **the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God**.¹² **Now we have received**, not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God**,¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”).
1. Only what the Holy Spirit has revealed to us through the apostles—the truth—**are the things we can know** are the **things of God** and that He **accepts** and **approves** of them!
 2. So, if we hope to please God by living in the truth, we had better be sure that the things we are teaching and practicing are **included, or revealed, in the truth** given by the Spirit.

IV. The truth is sufficient, or all we need to:

A. Evangelize the lost

1. The truth purifies and saves souls (1 Pet. 1:22-25 – “Since you have in **obedience to the truth purified your souls** for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,²³ for you have been **born again** not of **seed** which is perishable but **imperishable**, that is, through the living and enduring **word of God**.²⁴ For, “All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off,²⁵ but the **word of the lord** endures forever.” And **this is the word which was preached to you**.”).
2. So, it is God’s plan that the **truth be preached** to the world so that the world might **obey it and be purified from their sin** (2 Thess. 2:13 – “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning **for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth**.”).
3. We do not need fun and games, food, and entertainment, to save the lost.
 - a. These things are of the flesh not the spirit, and have not been revealed in the truth.
 - b. What we need is faith in the power of the gospel to save (Rom. 1:16).

- B. **Fully equip the saints for every good work** (2 Tim. 3:16-17 – “All **Scripture** [the truth] is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be **adequate** [complete], **equipped** [fully] for every good work.”).
1. It is God’s word, Scripture, the truth revealed that makes God’s people **adequate/complete** in their service to God, seeing it **fully equips us for every good work**.
 2. If you want to know the **works you are to do** in service to God and, **go to the truth revealed** by the Spirit to the apostle and see what it has **equipped you to do**.
 3. If you want to know the **works the local church is to do**, then **go to the truth revealed** by the Spirit and see what the local church has been **equipped to do**.
 - a. If you do this, you will find the local church being equipped by God to do **far less works than local churches are doing today**.
 - i. The local church is not equipped by the Spirit for recreation, social activities, etc.
 - ii. For, there is no revelation concerning churches providing recreation and social activities, or what recreation, etc., is to be provided (i.e., build a gym, etc.).
 - b. Instead, you will find that the works the local church is equipped to do are far more important than the works churches are doing today (i.e., equipped to preach the gospel, edify its members, and help needy saints). There is abundant scripture for these!
- C. **To establish and maintain godly unity**.
1. The **truth revealed by the Spirit** directs us to keep the **unity of the Spirit** (Eph. 4:1-6 – “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling** with which you have been called, ² with all **humility** and **gentleness**, with **patience**, showing **tolerance** for one another in **love**, ³ being **diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit** in the **bond of peace**. ⁴ There is **one body** and **one Spirit**, just as also you were called in **one hope** of your calling; ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**, ⁶ **one God and Father** of all who is over all and through all and in all.”).
 - a. The Spirit has revealed the **attitudes necessary** for godly unity (i.e., humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, love).
 - b. The Spirit has also revealed **the unifying truth necessary** for godly unity (i.e., on body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father).
 - c. Godly unity requires both. Emphasis on one without the other is not God’s will.
 2. The Spirit of truth **has more to say** about maintaining godly unity (Eph. 4:11-16 – “And He gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors and teachers**, ¹² **for the equipping of the saints** for the work of service, to the **building up of the body of Christ**; ¹³ **until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ**. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the **trickery of men**, by **craftiness in deceitful scheming**; ¹⁵ **but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ**, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, **being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies**, according to the **proper working of each individual part**, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”).
 - a. Godly unity requires continual **teaching of the truth in love** so that people can **grow**.
 - b. Because those in Christ are **growing**, godly unity requires that **we acknowledge** that brethren **are at different levels of maturity** concerning the truth and applying it.
 - i. Now, that means that godly unity can be messy and difficult at times!
 - ii. For everyone is not always able to reach the same conclusions concerning the **application of the truth** that the more mature can, because some lack knowledge of the truth needed to come to those conclusions!
 - iii. This is why the previous attitudes of patience, tolerance, love, etc., are required.

- c. So, the fact that people are at different levels of knowledge and understanding is not to affect biblical unity **unless one refuses to hear God's truth.**
 - i. This may happen because **the truth is not being presented in love**, which would be **sin** for the **teacher** and ultimately for the **hearer** (1 Tim. 4:16 – “Pay close attention to **yourself** and to **your teaching**; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will **ensure salvation** both for **yourself** and for those who **hear you**.”).
 - ii. This may happen because **someone does not want to grow or to change**. So, as Paul warned, they will seek preachers who will tickle their ears (2 Tim. 4:1-4).
 - iii. This may also happen because someone **makes themselves the standard of truth and law** within a congregation, rather than the truth itself.
 - 1) In other words, this can happen when someone **thinks he/she has reached full maturity**, that they **know the fullness of truth** and, therefore, that **their conclusions are the truth** that **all must unquestionably abide by**.
 - 2) In this case it is **this individual that is not hearing the truth** and therefore is in sin, resulting in the suffering of the congregation.
 - 3) This was the problem of Diotrephes (2 Jn. 9-10 – “I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who **loves to be first among them**, **does not accept what we say**.¹⁰ For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, **unjustly accusing us with wicked words**; and not satisfied with this, he himself **does not receive the brethren**, either, and **he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church**.”).
 - 4) Such a stance is both arrogant and divisive, and therefore condemned by God.
 - d. To maintain godly unity each of us must realize in **humility** that **we all have growing to do** in the truth because none of us have matured to the point in **attitude** and **knowledge** that meets the **measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ** (4:13).
3. So, the truth is sufficient for unity if those seeking it are **willing to listen to and apply all** that it says concerning the proper attitude and the need for truth to themselves and their brethren.

CONCLUSION:

1. As I conclude this series of lessons on the truth, I hope I have helped impress upon you:
 - A. The importance of truth and the role it must play in our lives as God's people.
 - B. What the truth is—that it is God's word given us through Christ, revealed to us by the Spirit through the apostles, and recorded for us in the Bible.
 - C. The unique characteristics of the truth and its applications to our lives, including how it is sufficient for our every need in serving Christ.
2. So, will you commit to the truth of Christ and walk in it? For, the truth is salvation, freedom, life, hope!
3. This commitment must begin, however, with obeying the truth revealed concerning our salvation from sin in Christ which requires your F-R-C-B.