

Truth Does Not Appeal To Everyone

Pilate asked the question that all who desire to avoid amenability to truth ask, and that is, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) Is it something so vague that it is elusive? Or is it without any firm basis, and, therefore, is whatever one chooses it to be? By its very definition, truth is discoverable. Truth is what is in "conformity to fact or actuality." - American Heritage Dictionary

Who knows the actuality of anything better than God? He alone knows the truth about all things. He created it all and is the Sovereign of the universe. (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 4:13) Whatever God says on any subject is true – "thy word is truth," John 17:17. Even though His revelation in the Holy Scriptures was not written as a text book on history, geography, science, et al., references in these areas are true, according to the reality of things.

The purpose of His revelation was not to instruct us in secular matters, but to reveal Himself and His will to man, to convict man of sin and offer deliverance from the guilt and eternal consequences thereof. His word is a guide to us in how to live righteously, soberly, and godly all the days of our life. (Tit. 2:11-12)

Jesus, as the Son of God, has revealed the truth by which we may be saved. (John 1:17, 8:40, 14:6) He sent the Holy Spirit to His apostles and prophets to guide them, to bring to their remembrance all that He had taught and to reveal to them things yet to come, so they would have knowledge of all truth. (John 14:26, 16:13; Gal. 1:6-8) What they received they wrote so that we might have the knowledge that they were given. (Eph. 3:3-5) Those who heard them received the word of God: not a word about God, but God's word. (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 2:7-13).

This revealed truth is essential to our present and eternal well being. Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32) Even so, many people have no interest in the truth.

Not Even to Hear It

Some people are prejudiced against the truth, and summarily reject it before and without ever hearing and understanding it. Prejudice means to pre-judge, to make judgment (discernment) before hearing the facts (or evidence).

God told Isaiah (6:9-10) this would be the case when he presented His word to Israel. They would hear what Isaiah said, that is audibly, but they would not hear, that is heed. The people had ears, the faculties to receive sound, but they would make no effort to understand what was said, no effort to comply with its demands. Jesus said this was true of the Jews during His earthly ministry. "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of

Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matt. 13:14-15).

Some, when they fail to hear what they want, without even considering whether it is true (of God) or not, simply turn away. They want to hear pleasant things, things that permit them to believe and practice what pleases them. When such is not forthcoming, they turn away in search of those who will tickle their ears (2 Tim. 4:2-3). When the attitude is, "I don't care what the Bible says; I know what I believe," then all persuasion to the contrary simply falls upon deaf ears.

Naaman is an example of one who was unwilling to listen to anything that differed from his predisposition. When the prophet Elisha told him to dip himself seven times in the Jordan river, he turned away in a rage. Elisha did not do as he had anticipated. He said, "Behold, I thought..." (2 Kings 5:11). His immediate action was to ignore and reject what Elisha had commanded. In his case, however, better heads prevailed.

Some are predisposed because of false reports and slander they have heard concerning the truth, or of those who preach it. For example, the Jews slandered Jesus: they said He worked miracles by power of Beelzebub (Mark 3:22-26). They discredited Him and tried to nullify His efforts in order to prejudice the people. On several occasions, Jesus was accused of having (being possessed by) a devil (John 7:20, 8:48, 52). If people came to believe that Jesus was possessed by a devil or that His miracles were performed by the power of Satan, then they would not listen to Him. His miracles would no longer convince them. They would be turned away without giving Him a hearing. In fact, we learn that some were thereby prejudiced, and said, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" (John 10:20).

Some Heard the Truth, With Overwhelming Evidence, and Still Would Not Accept It.

In spite of the fact that He produced divine credentials, performed miracles that confirmed His word and the fact that He was sent of the Father, they would not accept Him (John 3:2, Heb. 2:2-3). Even "though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him..." (John 12:37) They were unmoved by the divine demonstration. In that people saw the miracles and still did not believe, shows that a lack of acceptance is not always due to a lack of knowledge. Other considerations may block its reception. Let's consider some of the obstacles to accepting the truth.

Love Human Approval More

Even when some saw the miracles and believed, they did not accept Him (confess) because the approval of others meant more to them than the truth. "Nevertheless among

the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:42-43)

Love the World

Some love the world more than truth. Jesus made the point in His parable of the sower, when the seed (the word) is sown among the thorns. These hearers "when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14). Their pursuit of things in this world was more important than the truth. They did not accept the truth.

This is a fact of which we must ever be aware: there is an attraction to the world which must be resisted. A love for more precious and eternal things must outweigh interest in the mundane. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17).

One cannot love both God and the world equally: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6:24). A passion for the things of this world renders one unable to appreciate the spiritual, which eventually he rejects and despises. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4).

Comfortable with the Status Quo

Some are so prejudiced against anything that would call for change that they will even refuse to hear it. An example of such prejudice is seen in the Sanhedrin before whom Stephen stood. After rehearsing the history of Israel, apparently with no acceptance of the truth he preached, Stephen closed his speech with a rebuke: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." (Acts 7:51-53). Without giving serious thought to what he had said, they then "cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him" (verse 54).

When one is so satisfied with what he believes and practices that he will not allow himself to consider anything else, it is obvious that he does not love the truth. Truth is of no real importance; there is no felt need for it – he's satisfied. In such cases, where there is a lack of love for truth, God allows one to believe what pleases him, even

though it is grievous error. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2:10-11). The only assurance we have of ever coming to a knowledge of truth is first to have an honest heart, a desire to know what is the truth.

When one is satisfied and resents being told he is not right, he regards the one with the truth as an enemy. Paul feared this reaction even from brethren, whom he sought to correct in a matter of error: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

Love Is the Basic Problem

When people hear the truth, understand it, believe the evidence, and yet refuse to accept it, the basic problem is misplaced love: a love for self rather than for God. This selfishness is seen in several reasons why people refuse to accept the truth. Some reject the truth in their desire for...

-Acceptance in society: as the chief rulers (John 12:42-43).

-Approval of family: Matt. 10:37.

-Material security: Luke 12:20-21. God said unto the rich ruler, who found no time for God, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

-Pleasures of sin. In the case of Moses, he had "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25).

If one is to enjoy the blessings God has prepared for them who love Him, he must show the preeminence of this love by denying himself. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:24-26). Again, Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15).

All who love God love the truth. The truth does not appeal to all men for the reason that not all men love God.

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