

A Light in the Valley

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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Truth Is Not Like a Litter of Puppies

by: Kris Brewer

Recently, I was watching a TV show that had an interesting interaction between two of the characters. One said something to the effect of, “Maybe this is his truth. It might not be your truth, or mine, but it has become his reality.” To this, the second character responded, “Truth is not like a litter of puppies! You can’t just choose which one you like the best!” This makes a good point, which is applicable to our present time, both with secular and spiritual implications. We live in a time (and it is not anything new) in which people view “truth” as arbitrary. They believe they can choose their truth, and it must be accepted, regardless of the absurdity of their belief. That is not, however, how *truth* works!

Some have tried to separate the idea of dealing with truth in the secular world from how we might deal with it in the religious world. Of course we must be careful with THE truth. But, some would say that when it comes to being truthful in the secular arena, it is not

so imperative that we show the same care and concern. I would suggest that the two cannot be separated. There is a certain attitude that is required to seek out and honor truth in general that will impact how we perceive the truth of the gospel and scripture. This is why Paul could write:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Coming to understand the truth of the gospel takes having a “love of the truth.” Without such a love, one will easily be deceived. How can this principle

not apply when considering secular *truth*? If one does not have a love for truth in general, then he will not discover truth. He will be deceived by other things that will detract from his ability to find the truth on any matter. There are some principles concerning truth in general, and truth as it relates to God's word, that help to identify what is really truth and help to reflect the problems that interfere with discovering that truth.

Before we get to the main principles, consider the interaction between Jesus and Pilate that shows the nature of truth, and the difficulties some have in accepting truth:

Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all." (John 18:37-38)

Pilate's question reflects a problem that many today have. They are unwilling to accept the existence of truth. There is no absolute in their manner of thinking. Pilate seems to be asking if "truth" can be identified, or separated from falsehood. Perhaps, his own problem was one of these principles that we will examine.

Let's consider the definition of "truth":

1. *the true or actual state of a matter*
2. *conformity with fact or reality; verity*
3. *a verified or indisputable fact, proposition, principle, or the like*

Understanding these definitions will help us to make good applications concerning truth.

Truth is not arbitrary. Some people think that truth is determined simply by what they think it ought to be. Truth is truth only because we believe that is the way it ought to be, not because that is the way that it really is. Of course, with such an approach, there can be no such thing as truth! If truth changes based on what each individual thinks it ought to be, there can be no such thing as an absolute truth, or reality. When people believe that truth is arbitrary, they are saying that there is no standard by which truth can be judged. To suggest that there is a standard would mean that someone would have to be wrong about their judgment

concerning the truth of a matter.

A good example of arbitrary truth in our society has to do with the representation of “gender” in recent years. The claim that you can be whatever gender you want to be, based solely on how you feel or what you choose to believe to be true, means that there is no truth. We cannot know what is right or wrong, because we may not know how a person feels at the moment! When there is no standard, we do not find that there are multiple truths that must be adhered to. Rather, we discover that there is no such thing as truth at all!

Truth is not subjective. It is not uncommon for people to try and claim that truth is subjective, rather than objective. That is, they believe that truth is always open for interpretation, and not restrained by an objective standard. Truth, however, is established on evidence. Facts are judged based upon what evidence exists to support it. It should be obvious that evidence that is misused or misrepresented does not establish truth, and should be rejected by those who love the truth.

Recently, in the news, there have been a couple of instances in which evidence has been presented, and then shown to be false. One included the photo of a young child crying, which was put forth as evidence of atrocities at the southern border of the United States. It turned out that the photo did not depict what the proponents claimed. A second photo depicted children in cages, and was used to condemn the policies of the current administration. As it turns out, at least some of those photos were taken many years ago, under a different administration. The evidence that was presented was not evidence of the claim at all! My intent is not to comment one way or the other on this political issue. However, we as followers of God should take warning about how we process “evidence.” When even Christians responded to these type of incidents with, “it doesn’t really matter...it COULD have been...,” they are revealing that the truth does not matter to them, but only an agenda. Truth is established on facts. If we are not honest with the interpretation of the evidence, then we are adopting the attitude that truth is subjective, and can be whatever we want to be true.

Truth is not relative. To accept that truth is relative is to accept that there is no such thing as absolute truth. To consider truth to be relative is to believe that circumstances or beliefs alter what is true. For example, there are many who change the meaning of the word of God simply because what they read there does not fit with our current cultural and societal norms. They believe the truth of the scriptures must change to keep pace with what is acceptable in our current society. Of

course, that changes regularly as our society changes. Practices such as accepting homosexuality, women evangelists, and even things like abortion, are the direct result of accepting the idea that truth is relative.

Instead, truth is absolute. There is a standard by which truth can and should be evaluated. God has revealed His mind for all men, for all time. What He has delivered is applicable to all. We have the responsibility of studying it to ensure that we apply it correctly, but to simply dismiss what is said because it does not fit with our current world view is a direct assault on the very concept of *truth*.

Truth is not determined by who is speaking. Sometimes, we accept something as truth simply because we like the person who is speaking it. This is another area that can be clearly illustrated in the political arena. Quite often, a proposal can be made by one person or party, and it is received with great enthusiasm by that party. It is completely rejected by the other side of the aisle. However, within just a few years, when the power shifts in Washington, a person for the other party can suggest the exact same thing, and suddenly the original party is opposed to the proposition with great vehemence; even calling the proposition they supported just a few short years before “immoral.”

Unfortunately, we as Christians sometimes have the same type of attitude toward spiritual things. We agree with some doctrine because someone we like teaches it. I once had a man rebuke me after a sermon with, “That is not the way so-and-so preaches it!” He was not interested in discussing the topic to try to ascertain truth, but only with defending the person that he liked. Truth is not determined by accepting what a particular person teaches. It is, as has been stated before, determined by fact!

There are a few limited instances in which the person speaking determines what truth is, but that is only when the person speaking has either innate authority, or has conferred that authority directly to another.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.
(John 17:16–19)

The word of God is truth. When He speaks, it is truth. When the Son speaks, it is truth. When those who have been given authority to speak on His behalf (the inspired writers, apostles) speak, it is truth. Men today do not possess the author-

ity that is necessary to declare that their word is truth simply by the fact that they are speaking it. We can teach the word of the Lord, but our authority is only found in Him, not from within ourselves. That means that we can make mistakes with interpretation or application. If any man can make these mistakes, then we must not rely on any man to be the authority for truth!

Truth is not determined by what we want to believe or practice. This could be the most egregious error that people today, in general, make. Many of us tend to approach the world from the standpoint of what we want to believe, rather than looking for what is true. This can be illustrated by the way that many approach the news as it is delivered in the United States today. There are outlets that clearly lean one direction or the other (liberal or conservative), and in general, we tend to navigate toward (and believe) those sources that lean in our direction. In short, we tend to believe the slant that supports what we already want to believe!

The same principle often holds true when it comes to studying the word of God. Too many people go to the scriptures to confirm the beliefs they already hold, not to discover God's will for them. Doctrine is often rejected simply because it does not agree with what we have "always believed."

It is a challenge to approach our Bible study with fresh eyes. We find it difficult to put away our ingrained beliefs, and only search out what the Bible actually says. If we start out determined that we will believe a particular thing, it is not difficult to make the Bible seem to support our belief. However, in the end, we are not finding truth, but only satisfying our own desires.

Truth is of the utmost importance. Jesus said:

"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

If we want the freedom that is in Christ, we must have a love for truth. That love for the concept of truth will not be restrained to only our view of scripture. In fact, it would be, it seems, very difficult to have a "love for the truth" as it applies to scripture if our general world view did not reflect a "love for the truth." If we don't care about truth when it comes to how we view events of our day, then that attitude will most assuredly impact our approach to scripture as well.

Do we have a love for truth? Does it show in the way we conduct ourselves in our daily lives? Does it show in the way we approach the word of God? Or do we treat it like a litter of puppies, and just pick the version that suits us the best?

Priests of God Today

by: Rick Liggin

In the book of Malachi, God voices several complaints against the nation of Israel. All were dishonoring Him to some degree, but the Levite priests were the chief offenders (Mal. 1:6 – 2:9). As Israel's spiritual leaders, they were the ones most responsible for this godless irreverence among the people.

There were at least two major ways in which the priests had led the people to dishonor God: 1) they had come to see the sacrificing of animals as a "tiresome" task and were, therefore, defiling God's altar with inferior offerings (1:8-14); and 2) they were not living up to the moral standard set for them by God and thereby had lost the respect of those they taught (2:1-9).

In this second section, God tells them that "the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi...So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people..." (2:7-9).

Notice that from God's perspective, a priest is supposed to "preserve knowledge" so that men will seek him out for the instruction he can offer. To "preserve knowledge" is more than just keeping track of God's message and faithfully relating it to others. It includes one's living up to that message himself. The priest who does not live up to the message of God is not really preserving knowledge at all, even though his verbal teaching may be exactly in keeping with what God has said! It is only when a priest truly preserves knowledge that others will seek him out to receive his instruction.

Some Applications for Today

Now, I'm fully aware of the fact that under the new covenant we no longer have priests from the tribe of Levi; but can't we, at least in principle, make some kind of application to us in this dispensation? I believe we can! As a gospel preacher, I almost immediately see how this principle applies to those of us who preach and teach God's Word today. We are obligated to live in such a way as to command the respect of people so that they will want our instruction. People generally do not respect or want to be taught by someone who is a hypocrite or whose own life is inconsistent with what he teaches. If I want folks to respect me enough to listen to what I teach, then I'd better give attention to the message myself and make sure

that “I practice what I preach.” I feel certain that this is what Paul had in mind when he urged young Timothy to “pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching...” (1 Tim. 4:16).

But this principle doesn’t just apply to the preachers and Bible class teachers among us. The truth is that under the new covenant every Christian is a priest! Together, we form a “holy” and “royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9) and, as such, each one of us is “able to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). And since this is the case, the point God made to the priests of Israel is applicable to every one of us as priests today! We are under obligation as priests to “preserve knowledge”—to live in such a way as to command the respect of a lost world so that they will come to us for teaching and instruction!

Some Conclusions to Consider

You need to understand something. Now that you’re a Christian, you’re not a “nobody” anymore! You are “somebody” now. You’re a priest! And though this brings with it great blessings and benefits, it also brings with it an obligation to be holy in all your ways! Why? Because some in this lost world are looking! They are looking for someone to guide them in the way that leads to life. And they will only listen to us as the messengers of God if our lives reflect a holiness that is consistent with what we teach as priests of God.

Don’t be like the priests of Old Testament Israel who dishonored God by not living up to the moral standard He set for them. Rather, let’s be sure to honor God by being holy in all our conduct and behavior (1 Pet. 1:15). Maybe then we can reach a lost and dying world with the saving message of Christ. There is probably no time—in my lifetime, anyway—when we as God’s people (in America, at least) have needed more to hear this message and answer the call to true holiness as priests of God. I fear we are losing our distinctiveness to a worldly culture that is tempting us to conform to its standards. Please, brothers and sisters, let’s all remember who we are!

From [Think Magazine Online](#)

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM

Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

Daily Bible Reading

February 2019

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|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------------|
| February 1 | Genesis 1-3 | February 15 | Genesis 28:1-30:24 |
| February 4 | Genesis 4-5 | February 18 | Genesis 30:25-31:55 |
| February 5 | Genesis 6-9 | February 19 | Genesis 32-34 |
| February 6 | Genesis 10-11 | February 20 | Genesis 35-36 |
| February 7 | Genesis 12-15 | February 21 | Genesis 37-38 |
| February 8 | Genesis 16-18 | February 22 | Genesis 39:1-41:36 |
| February 11 | Genesis 19-21 | February 25 | Genesis 41:37-42:38 |
| February 12 | Genesis 22-23 | February 26 | Genesis 43-44 |
| February 13 | Genesis 24-25 | February 27 | Genesis 45-47 |
| February 14 | Genesis 26-27 | February 28 | Genesis 48-50 |

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