

Give Me the Truth

Introduction

- I. The year was 536 B.C. and scene is ancient empire of Persia. God “stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the temple (Ezra 1:1-3). Zerubbabel was among leaders of God’s people and he, along with a man named Jeshua, was appointed to lead the first contingent of the Jews to return from Babylonian captivity.
- II. There is an old story – probably more fable than fact – told about Zerubbabel and his involvement in the life of Darius that eventually led to Cyrus’ decree to allow the Jews to return to their homeland – and it serves to illustrate the point of this lesson...

One night Darius, king of Persia, was awakened by the sound of an argument between three men assigned to stand guard over his bedchamber. They were debating **truth** was the strongest thing in the world. Instead of telling them to be quiet, Darius listened. Unable to settle the dispute between themselves, the next morning they brought their argument to the king.

The first man argued, “Wine is strongest thing in the world. It makes fools of even the greatest men. The mightiest king and the most ignorant child are equal when under its power. The sad become happy because of it. It makes all, even the poorest, feel rich. Their talk becomes inflated, their memories dulled, so that, whether they love or quarrel over their wine, it amounts to the same thing, because afterward they forget all about it.

The second argued, “The king is the strongest in all the earth. He sends men to war, and they go, conquering countries along the way and bringing the spoils to the king. The farmer sows and reaps, and pays a large share of his gain in taxes to the king. He is one man, but when he orders a person to be put to death, it is done. He commands and others are spared. People listen to and obey him, and he does as he pleases. The king is the strongest in all the world.”

At last the third, a young man named Zerubbabel, presented his case before the king. “It is truth which conquers all. Wine is wicked, the king is wicked, all the children of men are wicked, and they shall perish. But **truth**. She is always strong, she never dies and is never defeated. With truth there is no respect of persons, and she cannot be bribed. She does the things that are just. She is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth.”

When Zerubbabel was finished, the king rendered his verdict: “Great is truth, and mighty above all things.” And he said to Zerubbabel, “You are the wisest, ask of me whatever you will.” Thus, the king of Persia was persuaded to allow the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem.

- III. Whether this story is true or not is beside the point. As Zerubbabel is reported to have said, truth is stronger than wine and stronger than kings. Indeed, truth last forever. “Blessed be the God of truth.”

- IV. We live in a post-modern world where we're told there are no absolutes, that all belief systems are valid, and that everything is relative. Subjectivism rules the day.
- A. There are few truly objective standards anymore and, if there are, they are often challenged.
 - B. Truth is considered by many, if not most, people to be whatever any individual wants it to be. Thus we often hear phrases like "my truth," "your truth," "their truth," etc.
 - C. It makes me think that our society has become altogether like ancient Israel where "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6; 21:25).
 - D. The "truth" is, there is no "*my truth, your truth, or their truth.*" There is only *the truth*, the veritable absolute essence of a matter.
 - E. One place where this becomes extremely important is in the fact that, without an objective standard of truth, there is nothing by which a man can be judged and to which he can truly be held accountable, nor any reason to hold him accountable for that matter.
 1. I think, with a little reflection, you can easily see this in the courts of our land regarding crimes and their punishments.
 - F. Spiritually speaking the Bible is God's word and is, therefore, the truth (John 8:32; 17:17; Heb 6:18). And, but its very nature it is objective. There is no such thing as "subjective truth." These are mutually exclusive terms.
 1. If anything is subjective it is whatever I want it to be.
 2. If anything is true it is the veritable absolute essence of a matter — to me and everyone else around me.
 3. The very existence of truth, then, forms the basis for accountability before God, and even judgment when we fail to do what He expects of us.
- V. Now, consider the encouragement of the wise man...
- Pro 3:3-4
 3 Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart.
 4 So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.
- Pro 23:23
 23 Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.
- A. Truth is absolutely indispensable to our relationships with both God and man. Nothing can take its place! Everything must be done that can be done to *secure* and *safeguard* truth.
 - B. God's people are encouraged in the Scripture to...

1. Call upon Jehovah in truth...

Psa 145:18

18 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

2. Serve Jehovah in truth...

Josh 24:14

14 "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

1 Sam 12:24

24 "Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

3. Walk before Jehovah in truth...

1 Kgs 2:4

4 so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'

Psa 86:11

11 Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.

2 John 4

4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.

3 John 4

4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

4. Worship God in truth...

John 4:23–24

23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

C. Both our *service to* and our *relationship with* God must be founded upon truth, because truth is an inherent characteristic of deity...

1. Jehovah is a God of truth

Psa 31:5

5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.

Isa 65:15–16

15 “You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones, And the Lord GOD will slay you. But My servants will be called by another name.

16 “Because he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My sight!

a. Truth goes before His face...

Psa 89:14

14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.

b. All His works are truth...

Dan 4:37

37 “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

c. His ways are true...

Rev 15:3

3 And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!

d. He cannot lie...

Num 23:19

19 “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

Tit 1:1–2

1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,

2. Jesus is the very personification of truth...

John 14:6

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

3. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth...

John 15:26

26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

- D. Both our *service to* and *our relationship with* God must be based upon the word of God, because it is the word of truth...

John 17:17,19

17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

19 “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

1. The judgments (ordinances, rules) of Jehovah are true...

Psa 19:9

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

2. The word of Jehovah is right...

Psa 33:4

4 For the word of the LORD is upright, And all His work is done in faithfulness.

3. The law of Jehovah is truth...

Psa 119:142

142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.

4. The commandments of Jehovah are truth...

Psa 119:151

151 You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth.

5. The gospel is the word of truth...

Eph 1:13

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

[So, with all this in mind, let's consider a few more practical things...]

Discussion

- I. The truth is vitally important...

- A. It frees...

John 8:31–32

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then

you are truly disciples of Mine;
32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

1. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth will free a man from the shackles of sin
2. A lie will not save (cf. 1 Kgs 13:1-25)

B. It purifies...

1 Pet 1:22–23

22 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.

1. Believing a lie — practicing a lie — will not purify

C. It sanctifies...

John 17:17,19

17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.....

19 “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

1. A falsehood will not sanctify

D. It protects...

Psa 91:4 (NKJV)

4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth (faithfulness - NASB) shall be your shield and buckler.

1. The girdle of truth is part of the Christian’s armor to protect his from the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10ff)

E. It will judge...

Psa 96:13

13 For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.

Jn 12:48

48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

Rom 2:2

2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

1. Nothing but the truth can save us when we stand before the righteous Judge of all the universe

II. Sometimes the truth is painful to take...

A. Physically speaking, this is certainly the case...

1. When a doctor enters the room and tells the alcoholic that he has cirrhosis of the liver...
2. When a homosexual is diagnosed with AIDS...
3. When the IRS informs you that you have underpaid your taxes...

B. But this is also true spiritually speaking; the truth can be hard to take...

1. The Jews on Pentecost who were told that they had crucified the Messiah (Acts 2:22-23, 36)
2. The rich young ruler who was told that there was one thing lacking in his life (Mk. 10:17-22)
3. Saul of Tarsus who was told that in His persecution of Christians, he was actually persecuting the Lord (Acts 9:3-6)
4. Imagine the heartbreaking anguish and the gut-wrenching torment that the truth must have caused in the lives of these people

C. But folks, the truth is still the truth even when it hurts.

III. The truth is still the truth even though...

A. People refuse to listen to it...

1. Bible examples...

Zech 7:8–12 (*To the hardened remnant that came from captivity*)

8 Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying,

9 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother.

10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, The alien or the poor. Let none of you

plan evil in his heart Against his brother.’

11 But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear.

12 Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.

Acts 7:51 (*Stephen, and the reaction to his sermon*).

51 “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.....

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;

2. It still happens...

a. People sometimes “tune you out” in the middle of a sermon...

b. Once, I was preaching on the social gospel (Overland church, Lawrenceburg, Ky), and a visiting gentleman—not liking what I said—got up and walked out.

c. But that doesn’t change the truth...

B. People do not believe it...

1. Bible example...

Acts 28:23–27 (*Jews in Rome*)

23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, 26 saying, (*From Isa 6:9-10 - jhd*) ‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive;

27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” ’

2. It still happens...

a. Many still refuse to believe in Jesus as the Messiah of O.T. prophecy (Jews, Muslims, modernists, etc.), but the truth is still the truth.

b. The Bible is still the word of God, the truth, even though *skeptics* and the *critics* don’t accept...

c. There really is a God even though the *atheists* do not believe it...

C. It isn't what people expects it to be...

1. Naaman is a good Bible example... 2 Kgs. 5:1ff, 10-14

a. He expected the prophet to come out to see him, not his servant

b. He expected the prophet to do some great thing, he didn't do it.

c. He expected a great feat to be required of him, but he was told to go dip seven times in the Jordan.

2. The Jews in Jesus' day are another Bible example. They were expecting a Messiah who would come riding into Jerusalem on a white stallion delivering them from Roman oppression...

3. And it still happens today. The truth is often rejected because it is not what people expect it to be...

a. The plan of salvation

b. God's law on marriage

c. The organization of the local church

d. The work of the local church

e. The worship of the local church

f. The role of women

4. Orville Wright: "If we all worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true is really true, there would be little hope of advance." (*Letter*, June 7, 1903)

D. People sincerely believe something else...

1. Consider the young prophet from Judah who was commissioned by God to cry out against Jeroboam's altar at Bethel (1 Kgs 13:1ff) — he was deceived into believing a lie and it cost him his life.

2. Saul of Tarsus sincerely believe that he was serving God when he was persecuting Christians, but he was wrong (Acts 26:9-11; 32:1)

3. Sincerity is absolutely essential, but sincerity alone is not enough...

Matt 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’
23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

4. Consider this...
 - a. Muslims may *sincerely* believe that Muhammad was a prophet of God, but that doesn’t make it so
 - b. The Jews may *sincerely* believe that Jesus is not the Son of God, but that doesn’t mean they are correct
 - c. Mormons may *sincerely* believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, but that doesn’t make it so
 - d. Denominationalists may *sincerely* believe that you don’t have to be baptized to be saved, but that doesn’t change what the N.T. teaches about the necessity of baptism

- E. People throw away their Bibles...
 1. The prophet Jeremiah dictated to Baruch, his amanuensis, a message of destruction—written on a scroll—which was to be read to the people of Jerusalem.
 - a. Jehoiakim the king of Judah, heard about it, had the scroll brought to him, cut it up with a scribes knife, and threw it into the fire.
 - b. It still didn’t change the truth of Jeremiah’s message—God commanded that he reproduce the scroll—and added judgment against the house of Jehoiakim.
 2. People throw their Bibles in the fire today in many ways...
 - a. Failing to read and study it (might as well throw it in the fire)...
 - b. By twisting what it says (might as well throw it in the fire)... cf. 2 Pet 3:15-17
 - c. By reading it through their own theological bias...
 3. Still, though we throw our Bible away—throw it in the fire—the message is unchanged and truth is still the truth.

- F. People find somebody else who will tell them what they want to hear...
 1. Ahab the king of Israel had gathered to himself 400 prophets who were “yes men,” — men who told him only what he wanted to hear (1 Kgs 22:1ff), not the truth...

2. Jeremiah later acknowledged that the same problem continued in Israel...

Jer 5:30–31

30 “An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land:

31 The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?

3. It’s not too hard today to find a preacher somewhere who will tell you what you want to hear and believe, and it’s amazing what piddling arguments we’ll accept to prove what we want to believe

- a. Baptism...
- b. Marriage, divorce, and remarriage...
- c. Once saved always saved...
- d. Instrumental Music...
- e. The role of women in the assembly...
- f. How God communicates His will to man...

4. In fact, Paul warned Timothy that the time would come when many of his brethren would do that very thing...

2 Tim 4:3–4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5. Francois de La Rochefoucauld: “*Truth does not do so much good in the world, as the appearance of it does evil.*” (Maxims, 59)

- a. Translation: What people *think* is the truth does more harm than *actual truth* does good.

G. The majority of people believe something else...

1. Truth doesn’t always stand with the majority. Elijah stood alone against the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah (1 Kgs 18:19-40). So, just because the majority believe something to be true doesn’t make it true...
2. This doesn’t mean that if the minority is on your side that you automatically have truth on your side. Though the majority is often wrong (Matt 7:13-14), they are not always wrong...
3. Fact is, we just cannot determine truth by *how many* embrace it, whether they

are in the *majority* or the *minority*...

H. People get rid of the proclaimer of truth...

1. Bible examples:

- a. Ahab tried to get rid of Micaiah and his message (1 Kgs 22:1ff, 26-28), but it still didn't change the truth.
- b. Herod and Herodias (Mt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-29) had John the Baptist beheaded, but John's message was still true.
- c. The Jews in Jesus' day (Jn. 8:39-40) put Him to death, but truth remained unchanged.
- d. The Jews who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:54-58), but getting rid of him did change truth.

2. Many have been the preachers in our generation who tackled the difficult issues and they were "let go for the good of the cause" — but the truth is still the truth.

I. Though we do not like the consequences...

1. Herod and Herodias faced a difficult decision (Mt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-29). They were *adulterers* and the *only decision* they could make that would put them back in God's grace was to *repent* and *separate*.
2. In a society in which so many divorce and remarry without Scriptural cause, that same decision faces a lot of couples today. So many are not willing to make it, but that still doesn't change the truth!
3. In the same way, sometimes there are unpleasant consequences faced by those who obey the gospel (family problems, financial problems, etc.)...
4. Sometimes, there are unpleasant consequences for those who accept what the N.T. teaches about strictly obeying God's word without deviation from the N.T. pattern...
 - a. Many have divided families as a result...
 - b. Many have lost friendships. Some, their jobs...
 - c. Many have faced ridicule and ostracism...
5. But truth is still the truth, not matter the consequences of obeying it.

J. Even though people do not obey it...

1. The rich young ruler (Mk. 10:17-22) walked away from Jesus having not "kept the commandments", but the truth was still the truth.

2. Whether or not either you or I accept the truth and obey it is immaterial. The truth is always the truth...

Conclusion

- I. The truth is always the truth!
- II. Bill Crews: If you are my friend, if you are concerned about my soul, give me the truth. Do not flatter me. Do not praise my virtues while remaining silent about my vices. Do not fear that the truth will offend me. Do not treasure our friendship, our friendly relations, above my salvation. Do not think that by ignoring my sins you can help. Do not think that being blind to my sins will prove yourself charitable. However I may react to it whatever may be my attitude toward you after you have done it, give me the truth! For the truth, and only the truth, can make men free from the shackles of sin, strengthen me in the pathway of righteousness and lead me to the joys of heaven. If I am wavering, weak, lukewarm, indifferent, neglectful; if I have been overtaken in a trespass, if I have been drawn into the pleasures of the world; if I have left my first love; if I have been led astray by error; or if I have done none of these, but simply need to grow in knowledge and be edified, give me the truth!