

THE NATURE OF TRUTH

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

God is maintaining His Kingdom in the midst of a varying and inconsistent environment. The righteousness of God is being demonstrated in a world overrun by unrighteousness. A holy God is glorified by reconciling unholy man. Spiritual illumination is now taking place where satanic deception is universal. According to Divine intent, truth is being proclaimed in the very realm where the lie has dominated!

The situation and circumstances just described requires that truth, the proclamation of which is the means of Kingdom propagation, be attentively heard and carefully thought upon. The reality and prevalence of unrighteousness, unholy men, Satanic deception, and even the "doctrines of demons" (1 Tim 4:1), demand that a clear and true message be delivered. Men cannot, of themselves, sort out the lies of the devil. These falsehoods are not detected by intuition or human analysis. It is by comparison with the truth that they are made known. Furthermore, the truth cannot be discovered if it is not first revealed, or made known. Sin renders man incapable of arriving at the truth on his own.

The words "the truth" occur eighty-seven times in Scripture – not "a" truth, but "THE truth." That "truth" is presented in words, not pictures. Truth may well be illustrated, but it is made known in words, or a message, or declaration. Those words are an affirmation, not a supposition. They are an announcement of what already exists and is unchangeable. It is for this reason that God is declared to be a "God of truth" (Deut 32:4; Psa 31:5; Isa 65:16). Jesus said of Himself, "I am the truth" (John 14:6). Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The Word of God is called "the word of truth" (2 Cor 6:7; Eph 1:13; 2 Tim 2:15; James 1:18). The manner in which believers live is referred to as "the way of truth" (2 Pet 2:2).

You see what holy associations are made with the truth: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. Those revealed associations alone should produce a compelling interest in "the truth."

"The truth of God" – a message delivered in words – is the appointed means of initiating, maintaining and bringing to its culmination the salvation of God. To put it another way, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). The truth is compacted in the Person of Christ, and is revealed through the Gospel of Christ – for the only thing relative to salvation that we know about Jesus is in the word of God. Where the Word of God is not preached, Christ cannot possibly be known.

God's means – working through the truth – are at variance with "the course of this

world” (Eph. 2:2). He is not a man, and He does not speak as a man. While the words of men are limited in perspective and duration, God’s Word is eternal. That is also a trait of His truth.

Chapter 2

THE SINGULARITY OF THE TRUTH ITSELF

Truth is preeminent to the informed. It is “the lip of truth” that shall be established (Prov. 12:19), and God is declared to be the “God of truth” (Psa. 31:5). Everything that God does is “in truth” (Psa. 33:4). Truth goes before Him, being in eternal association with Himself. As it is written, “. . . mercy and truth shall be before Him” (Psa. 89:14), and “. . . He shall judge . . . His people with His truth” (Psa. 96:13).

Truth has a wide spectrum. It is a large body of interrelated realities. As such, it is singular in nature. Truth is not comprised of a series of unrelated facts. Like God, truth is “one” in essence (Deut. 6:4). This means that it is perfectly united, and never at war with itself. From this perspective everything that is “true,” as God counts :true,” is embodied in “the truth.”

Truth is the rational and understandable declaration of God’s purpose, and the Kingdom of God identifies the execution of that purpose. The various parts of truth are complementary – never contradictory. This is why, in Scripture, “truth” is always mentioned in the singular. We never read of “truths” – it is always “TRUTH”! It is unfortunate that “the truth of God” (Rom 15:8) has been presented as a series of unrelated, and sometimes irrelevant, statements. It is this erroneous concept that has opened the door to division and schism in the body of Christ. All false doctrine is characterized by this trait – it fails to acknowledge some aspect of the truth, and accentuates that aspect above the whole of truth.

With deliberation, God molds our thinking concerning “truth” by His Word. We never read of “a truth,” but rather of “the truth,” thus underscoring a body of reality versus a facet of reality. It is the reception of “the love of THE truth” that saves the soul. This is a critical matter, as indicated by the following statement: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 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. 2:8-12). This statement should cause alarm in the modern church.

Our souls have been “purified” by obeying “THE TRUTH” (I Pet. 1:22). It is “THE way of truth” that is evil spoken of by the wicked (2 Pet. 2:2). Willful involvement in sin is most serious when one has “received the knowledge of THE truth.” As, it is written, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb 10:26-27). No contradicting doctrine can remove that fact. This is precisely why the pervading lack of Scriptural knowledge, and the failure to declare “all the counsel of God” (is so serious!

Returning to the vanities of this world is viewed by James as erring “from THE truth” (James 5:19), and when men lie, they lie “against THE truth” (James 3:14).

This single body of spiritual reality, as perceived within the New Covenant, is called “the truth . . . in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21). It is “the truth” (singular) because it speaks of a single Divine objective – one that is perfectly united in all of its aspects. It reaches its greatest degree of clarity “in Jesus.” It is from within the comprehension of that perfectly united spectrum – truth – that we come to love others that have embraced it (3 John 1).

Chapter 3

DIVINE USAGE

The use of the word “truth” by the Holy Spirit emphasizes its singleness. Our “loins,” for example, are to be “girt about with truth” (Eph. 6:14). This is a term denoting the profitable employment of our thought processes – elsewhere called “the loins of your mind” (I Pet.1:13). When our minds comprehend God’s “eternal purpose” and function in harmony with it, they become our chief personal resource. It is the contemplation of this united body of reality – not segmented and unrelated facts – that sanctifies the mind. Jesus referred to this process when He prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Jesus added something most arresting concerning this matter in that same prayer. "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). We learn from this that the apprehension of the truth of God depends upon our connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not speaking about the academic use of the mind – study habits, etc. While those things are involved, the catalyst to learning the truth is found in a living connection with Jesus. Without that, so far as identity with the Living God is concerned, all purported learning is vain.

The apprehension of truth consists of the correlation of heavenly realities in view of Divine objective. That is, by faith men are enabled to see the whole picture, which picture accents the Lord, and what He is doing. With great craftiness, and in regard to knowing the Lord and His will, Satan tempts men to rely on their own intellect, or that of someone else. However, the truth can have no sanctifying effect upon the soul if God Almighty is not personally involved in the work. In the carrying out of salvation, there is no point at which God Himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, are no longer necessary.

It is KNOWING “the truth” that liberates the soul, not a peculiar and secret aspect of it. Jesus states the fact succinctly, "And ye shall KNOW the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Knowing the truth is not a mere intellectual exercise – like knowing ABOUT the truth. This has to do with a personal experience in which the effects of the truth are realized. It is the kind of knowledge to which men refer when they speak of “knowing how to swim,” or “knowing how to fix an automobile.” It is knowing the truth in this sense that frees men from the dominion of darkness and enslavement to sin. This includes the liberation of the will.

There can be no spiritual freedom without the perspective which God’s truth imparts. To put it another way, men are “sanctified by the truth” (John 17:19), i.e. as they become spiritually aware of, consent to, and are governed by it. Further, this is not an automatic process. It is God who does the sanctifying work.

“The truth of the Gospel” (Gal. 2:5), is not the mere recitation of facts – the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:1-3). While those facts are true, “the truth” is the

declaration of the SIGNIFICANCE of those facts and of their bearing upon men. In the proclamation of the death of Christ, grand objectives were set forth as accomplished. Satan was destroyed (Heb. 2:14), “we were reconciled to God” (Rom. 5:10), and the “handwriting of ordinances that was against us” was blotted out (Col. 2:14). Those insights, together with many others, constitute “the truth of the Gospel.” But my point here is that the truth is single – it is not the truths of the Gospel, but “the truth of the Gospel”!

We read of “the truth of God” (Rom. 3:7), the “manifestation of the truth” (2 Cor. 4:2), the “acknowledging of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25), and “fellow-helpers to the truth” (3 John 8). Truth is single because it concerns a single purpose, a primary objective, and one Divine enterprise. Truth is not known unless the purpose is discerned, the objective comprehended, and the enterprise understood. In other words, one knows the truth when he knows what God is doing – what He has determined to accomplish in Christ Jesus! Those, of course, are matters that are revealed, in Scripture.

Chapter 4

TRUTH AND DIVERSITY

Truth is never diverse – there is NOT one body of truth for the Christian, for instance, and one for the Hindu. Truth is singular, not plural. There is not one truth for men, and another for women, or one message for the old and one for young. This was enunciated by the Lord when He said, “I am the way THE TRUTH and the life: no man comes unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). There is not one Jesus for the youth, and one for the rest of the church; not one Savior for the especially immoral, and one for the culturally refined.

Jesus is the embodiment of Divine purpose – the Truth. In order to come “to the Father,” it is necessary that HE be comprehended! It was not enough to grasp a little of what He said, or perceive a portion of what He did. It was Himself that had to be perceived, known, and believed! That perception might vary in degrees – the young as compared with the old – but they were both exposed to the same Jesus, and the same emphasis, or focus.

For example, when Jesus walked among men, He did not hold special meetings for the young people, or for those who were politically prominent. He did not go to a unique place to hold meetings especially designed for lepers, or for the crippled. If you were in one of these classes, you had to go where Jesus was. The young boy with a lunch of five loaves and two fishes had to go where Jesus was. Nicodemus, among the religiously elite, had to go where Jesus was. If a person was in a group of ten lepers, they had to go where Jesus was. All of them were exposed to the same Jesus, who accented the same thing.

I understand there were times when Jesus went to an area to especially show mercy on an individual:– i.e. the Gadarene demoniac (Mk 5:1-19), the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30), Jairus’ daughter (Mk 5:22-24,35-43), etc. However, these people were introduced to the same Jesus that spoke to the multitudes. Their view of the Lord was not slanted because of a unique approach He had to them. It did not conflict with anything Jesus had said elsewhere.

The only time Jesus spoke seemingly differently was when He was with alone with His

disciples (Matt 26:20; Mk 3:7; 4:10). Even then, the difference was in depth, not in the nature of what He said. He opened up what had been spoken to the multitudes, or expounded things that were hidden in what He said to the masses. But He never spoke to His disciples of a different truth, or a differing body of teaching. Often He would show some aspect of the truth, or enlarge upon the scope of truth – but He never spoke in contradiction of what He had said to anyone else. That is because Truth is singular, and He was the Truth.

I understand that this sharply conflicts with modern day perceptions of effective ministry. Today there are people who are supposedly preaching Jesus and the truth to a particular body of people – say, the youth. What is of great concern, is that the message they are delivering is giving a different view of Jesus, a varying perception of the nature of sin, a surface view of life that does not include the facts of death and the day of judgment (Heb 9:27). Others go to religious schools and come out with a different view of Scripture, one that represents the Word of God as filled with various errors, or sections that do not belong in them. They have a different ideas of proper focus, and the nature of Kingdom labors.

Still others are identified with differing denominations that accent different things. Some represent, what they have chosen to call, “the Great Commission,” making that the premier activity of the church. Others represent social work, helping and feeding the poor, etc, as the primary activity. Still others have an accent upon the health and wealth of the individual.

However, truth is singular, not plural. “The Truth of God” (Rom 1:25; 3:7; 15:8) cannot produce conflicting conclusions, or present differing points of focus. Where there are fundamentally different emphases, someone has not told the truth.

Chapter 5

ASPECTS OF THE TRUTH

An aspect of the truth is a facet of ultimate reality – a particular view of it. Its relevancy is in its association with the body and summation of truth itself. A rather crude likeness to this is found in a diamond. In its raw state, a diamond has little luster, and may even be regarded as nothing more than a worthless rock. However, after it has been properly cut, the various facets of that diamond give it its beauty, and confirms its value. Further, the cutting of the diamond verifies its legitimacy, for an ordinary stone cannot endure such a process.

The same can be said of the truth itself, the only difference being that truth is not chiseled, or parts of it discarded. As you ponder the truth as a whole, certain facets of it display a unique glory – and there will be one facet, like the facet of a finished diamond, that will be more prominently displayed, and will be the to, or most visible part, of the diamond. With the truth of God, the primary facet is Jesus Christ Himself, and He is more prominently displayed when the truth is declared. The glory and value of the truth, you might say, is gathered together in Christ Jesus, so that when He is correctly seen, the rest may also be seen. If He is not perceived, men can only theorize about the whole of the truth, or its other various facets.

Take, for instance, the different aspects of Christ’s ministry. Although He did many things, they were all for one purpose. He was born, He grew, He ministered among men,

He suffered, He died, He was buried, He arose, He ascended into heaven, and He sat down on the right hand of God in a glorified state. Those are all different things – unique in their manifestation. But they all focused on one end, the accomplishment of God’s purpose for man’s salvation. Further, they all are complementary, causing the light of Divine purpose or objective to shine more brightly.

Viewing the reconciliation of man as God’s grand objective in Christ, think of the various aspects of that objective. There is the viewpoint of Divine requirement: a propitiation for sin (Rom. 3:25), a Savior “made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17), and the opening of the way to God (Heb. 9:8; 10:18-22). That same enterprise is also perceived from the standpoint of its accomplishments. Christ “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26), destroyed the Devil (Heb. 2:14), and “redeemed us from the curse of the Law” (Gal. 3:13). Another aspect of God’s purpose is that of provision. Christ is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (I Cor. 1:30). Yet another aspect of the Kingdom is the means of appropriating its benefits. Obedience (Heb. 5:9), holiness (Heb. 12:14), and self-denial (Matt. 10:38). Together with other revealed factors, these are all sub-points of the redemptive enterprise.

All of these aspects, or facets, have proper significance only as they are related to the Divine objective. They do not stand independent of, but united with, that central design.

Chapter 6

ILLUSTRATED IN CHRIST

The unity of God’s purpose in Christ, and so in the truth itself, is perfectly demonstrated in the Son’s earthly life and ministry. He was born of a virgin (Matt 1:23), born “under the Law” (Gal. 4:4). As a child He "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40), and He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). As a man, He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the Devil (Acts 10:38). He was “crucified through weakness” (2 Cor. 13:4), and raised from the dead “by the glory of the Father” (Rom. 6:4). “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive” (Eph. 4:8), and “is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him” (I Pet. 3:22). He is at once the “Lord” (Phil 2:11), “Head over all things” (Eph 1:22), “Savior” (Tit 3:6), Mediator” (1 Tim 2:5), “Intercessor” (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), “Shepherd” (Heb 13:20), “Vine” (John 15:5), “Teacher” (John 3:2; Eph 4:20-21), “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim 6:15), “only Potentate” (1 Tim 6:15), “the Son of God” (Mk 1:11 John 5:5), “the Son of Man” (John 5:27), etc.

But none of these functions is to be isolated from the others. The death of Christ, for example, would be of no value without His resurrection (I Cor. 15:16-20). Nor, indeed, would His resurrection be significant if He did not ascend into heaven. And His ascension would have no value to us if He was not interceding for us (Rom 8:34). It is the blend of these facts that gives them their efficacy for man’s salvation. As they are perceived in the light of God’s design for man, they take on eternal significance.

A PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

An automobile consists of many different parts: a body, motor, transmission, tires, radiator, interior, electrical components, etc. There is even a further breakdown of its parts. The motor has pistons, valves, rods, etc. One of these components cannot properly

be termed an automobile. At best, it is only a portion of the automobile, and has its worth because of that association. Each part is, in this respect, an aspect of the vehicle. Men may become specialists in the building and repair of any one of the parts. However, their specialty has no value unless it contributes to the function of the automobile itself. While there may be an intense interest in one part of the automobile, only the interrelated performance of all of the parts serves its purpose.

So it is with the truth of God. Divine purpose is served when all aspects of the truth are perceived as complementary – harmoniously working together for man’s salvation. The objective of “the man of God” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), is not merely to become a specialist in some aspect of salvation, but to learn how to “rightly divide the word of truth,” or “handling accurately the Word of truth” (NASB) in its entirety (2 Tim. 2:15). Scriptures speak of believers being "able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Eph 3:18). Prayers were offered to God for the saints, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead, and set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:17-20).

Small and limited views of God, Christ, and salvation may exist at the beginning of one’s life of faith, but they are not intended to continue. When Jesus spoke of knowing the truth, and the truth making us free (John 8:32), He was not speaking of an aspect of the truth, or a single statement, but of the whole of the truth. In matters pertaining to salvation, the whole of truth must be seen before its details can be properly comprehended. That is, the sum of the details must be discerned before the details have their proper relevance. For example, if a person places his doctrinal stress upon the family, instead of upon God and Christ, they will have a distorted view of Divine purpose.

Chapter 7

SCRIPTURAL DETAILS

The Word of God – the “seed” – proclaims details in view of the revealed purpose of God. They deal with domestic issues, social issues, and moral issues. They make mention of personal purity, church polity, and spiritual responsibility. They proclaim what men are to do, and what men are not to do. But the emphasis of Scripture is NOT domestic matters, social involvements, or moral issues – not even “church” issues. The pillar of truth is not erected upon external purity, acceptable church government, or the fulfillment of responsibility. These are all facets of a larger body of reality.

Any emphasis of Scriptural detail that ignores the primary purpose of God is erroneous. Aspects of the truth are not intended to be ends of themselves, nor are they foundational in nature. They are, rather, the means of making the complexity of “the truth” discernible. Without the details, Divine purpose would not be intelligible to man, and he could not experience participation.

WHEN THE TRUTH IS PERCEIVED, THE ASPECTS ARE PERCEPTIBLE

Spiritual understanding is a preeminent thing in the heavenly Kingdom. Without it, there is no beneficial participation in the Divine enterprise. Paul prayed for churches, that they “might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;” (Col 1:9). Again, he prayed that “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (Eph 1:18-19). We are even told that "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding" (1 John 5:20). Paul further exhorted the church, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (1 Cor 14:20). In view of these statements, it is alarming to see so little “spiritual understanding” among professing Christians. That lack cannot be excused as though it is in any way acceptable.

The initial form of participation in the will of God – salvation – is accomplished through the “knowledge of the truth.” As it is written, ". . . God our Savior, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim 2:3-4).

As has already been stated, maturity is to characterize man’s understanding (I Cor. 14:20). As well, conformity to the Divine image is realized through man’s renewal in “knowledge.” As it is written, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). All of this underscores the role of perception. It is absolutely critical in the Kingdom of God.

In the God’s Kingdom, contrary to the manner of this world, main things are comprehended first. In the light of those primary areas, smaller things come to light. In the words of the Psalmist, “. . . in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa. 36:9). The reason for this is obvious. In God’s Kingdom, primary things are heavenly in nature, while secondary things have to do with our tenure in this “present evil world.”

This truth is reflected in the first and second commandments. The “first commandment,” or the primary directive, concerns loving God. The “second” concerns the love of our fellow man. (Deut. 6:4-5; 13:3). Jesus stated it succinctly: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31). Our love for man certainly does not shed a great amount of light upon the obligation to love God. However, our love for God does illuminate the matter of loving our neighbor –i.e. “In Thy light shall we see light.”

Chapter 8

WHEN THINGS MAKE SENSE

In Christ, the heavenly Kingdom is identified with a high level of understanding. Prior to Him, men were directed exclusively by precepts and commandments. There was an element of mystery associated with God’s rule. This was due to at least two things. First, sin, which had not been “put away” (Heb. 9:26), had a dulling effect upon man’s mind. Second, due to the defilement of man’s conscience, God could not have intimate fellowship with man. With “the atonement” (Rom. 5:11), however, the shroud of mystery was removed from God’s Kingdom.

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF THIS PRINCIPLE

In view of the determined destruction of the world, for instance, it makes perfect sense to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (2 Pet. 3:11; Titus 2:12). Godly resolve has been produced by spiritual understanding. It is not only the proper thing to do, it becomes a sensible thing to do – the only to do!

Again, our resolve to “know no man after the flesh” is constrained by our spiritual evaluation of the “love of Christ.” “For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again. WHEREFORE henceforth know we no man after the flesh . . .” (2 Cor. 5:14-16).

Here, a proper view of mankind has been fostered by a perception of the death of Christ. His death is associated with the putting away of the entire natural order, and the induction of “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet 3:13). The earth, together with all of its inhabitants, had already been repudiated by God – cursed of the Almighty (Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 8:20-23). A comprehension of that reality moves the reconciled to “know no man after the flesh” – i.e. primary associations are not maintained out of a reflection upon mere temporal matters. This is a reasonable consideration!

Before the New Covenant, refraining from fornication was accomplished primarily by obedience to the commandments. This was, and continues to be, good, and it is not my intention to minimize the value of such a response. It is not bad in any sense of the word. There is, however, a “better way” to cope with this troublesome matter. Reasoning upon the subject, Paul shows the impact of spiritual understanding.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh . . . he that committeth fornication sins against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (I Cor. 6:15-19).

Observe the reasoning of the Apostle. It is based upon primary considerations; the mundane is judged in view of the transcendent. An understanding of the fact that our response to the Gospel has made us “members of Christ” precludes involvement in fornication. Discernment of the fact that such a transgression results in forbidden union – “one flesh” – will not permit such a relationship! Serious consideration of the indwelling Spirit will cause one to refrain from this appeal to the lust of the flesh. This is a logical conclusion!

Chapter 9

CONSIDERATION OF THE PROMISES

There are two ways to deal with sin and its expressions. One is effectual, and one is ineffectual.

Sin can be dealt with according to the principle of law, which is for the lawless. As it is written, "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of

fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim 1:9-10. Under this arrangement, an effort is made to refrain from sin because "God said so."

The text does not say the Law "WAS" for the lawless, but that is "IS" for the lawless. That is who the Law was intended for, is intended for, and shall continue to be for as long as the world stands. When a person sins, they have violated God's Law, and they are to be informed of this reality. Again, this is a valid approach, and is not to be deprecated. In the larger picture, however, which includes abstaining from sin, it is an inferior one.

The better and more effective way, which stops sin from erupting, is that of the perception of the truth as expressed in the promises of God. "Having therefore these PROMISES, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the God" (2 Cor. 7:1). In light of the relationship to Christ and of the function of our body as the Spirit's temple, we are better enabled to "flee fornication." For example, we are told to "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

God has called us into a special relationship with Himself: "Wherefore come out from among them ("unbelievers," "unrighteous," and "the infidel"), and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor. 6:14-15, 17). The real issue here is not what is to be forfeited, but what is to be gained! The experience of Divine fellowship fully justifies the abandonment of any relationship contrary to it.

The comprehension of God's commitments, then, becomes the incentive for personal purity. The fundamental objective is not personal purity itself, but Divine fellowship (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 John 1:3). That fellowship, however, cannot be experienced in a state of moral defilement. It is, therefore, reasonable to "perfect holiness in the fear of God!"

In addition to this, the "promises" are the appointed means through which we become partakers of, or participants in, the Divine nature. As it is written, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that BY THESE ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet 1:4). You might say it this way, The Law convicts you of sin, but the promises of God, duly heeded and embraced, will keep you from sin. In view of this reality, it is a sin of the greatest magnitude when these promises are not diligently declared to the people of God.

Chapter 10

RESOLVING PROBLEMS BY TRUTH

Problems are an integral part of living in this world. The infection with sin, of life in particular and society in general, has produced an arena of intense conflict difficulty and challenge. Eliphaz, though limited in his apprehension, correctly diagnosed the situation. "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Job, responding to the analysis of Zophar, said, "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). This is the Scriptural view of problems. They are here – in this world

– and they are the lot of every man. No one is exempted from them while he is “in the body.”

There are at least two options open to man concerning the existence of problems, challenges, or tests. First, he can focus attention on them, and make them and their resolution his main concern. This approach is the manner of man in the kingdoms of this world. The other approach is the manner of the Kingdom of God, in which the individual seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. The first procedure considers problems as they appear on the surface. The second perceives them in contrast with eternal things, thus diminishing their apparent priority.

Problems can be considered within the context of the here and the now, or eternity; within the framework of self or of God; of temporal life or eternal life. One approach accents life in this world, the other places the emphasis on the world to come.

Summarizing all of the problems associated with life, and in particular with godliness, Paul wrote, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:17). The same Apostle said, “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen . . .” The reason for this outlook is that “the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). The truth of God is superior to the problems of life!

God’s Kingdom involves the emphasis of eternal life rather than temporary difficulties. The reason – truth is transcendent to problems! The Scriptural emphasis is a proper emphasis – it accords with reality.

When we live by focusing our attention on the things that are not seen instead of the things that are seen, we will find that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor 4:17). That “affliction” includes the various problems, difficulties, and challenges of life. They become opportunities to invest in eternity – to lay up treasures in heaven, where moth and rust does not corrupt, and thieves do not break through and steal (Matt 6:19). When we maintain our love for the truth (2 Thess 2:10-12), keep running the race with patience (Heb 12:1-2), and fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), problems become occasions to confirm our commitment to the Lord. They are times when our discretion can be honed to a fine edge. The power of faith can be confirmed, and our love for the Lord can increase.

However, if the truth of God is placed on the back burner of life, and the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is not our priority, then problems will beat us down, rob us of joy, and make life nearly intolerable.

Problems can be properly resolved by shining the light of truth upon them – by seeing them in light of what God has said about life in this world. He may even have spoken concerning the particular difficulty you are facing. Truth is to problems what the sun is to the environment of the earth. It helps you to see things correctly, and therefore to deal with them in an appropriate manner.

Chapter 11

THE NECESSITY OF PROPER PERSPECTIVE

Perspective considers all of the facets of life, and properly arranges them. The Kingdom of God presents God and His will as preeminent. This is to be the object of our primary concern. As it is written, "But seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). And again, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, WILL OF GOD" (Rom 12:1-2). And yet again, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what THE WILL OF THE LORD is" (Eph 5:17).

If this absolute and unwavering priority – the will of God – is not known and embraced as being preeminent, all understanding will be flawed and skewed in the wrong direction. By that I mean it will not be profitable, will not assist one in preparing for death and the Judgement (Heb 9:27), and will not contribute to living a life that God accepts (Eph 5:10; Phil 4:18; 1 Tim 2:3; 1 Pet 2:5,20).

Everything, therefore, that is associated with God and our relationship to Him assumes a place of eminence.

In a state of spiritual awareness anything that interferes with one's apprehension of God and His will, constitutes a significant problem. If it is not dealt with properly, it will diminish the heart's devotion, and deplete the strength of the soul. Thus are we have been provided with spiritual weaponry that can effectively cast "down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God," and bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

As serious as domestic and social issues may appear – and they do, indeed, often appear serious – they are still subservient to the higher issues involving eternal life. The Word of God, together with "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3) are not primarily given for these areas of life. Temporal matters are always peripheral matters in the Kingdom of God. To be sure, they are dealt with, but they are addressed with eternity in mind. For example, in addressing some issues concerning marriage, Peter spoke after this fashion: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7).

Here is the Divine hierarchy, or ranked order, of reasoning on the matter. "Dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife . . ." is the practical view, and the most rudimentary level. You will observe that no details are provided. The fact that husband and wife were "heirs together of the grace of life," viewed the relationship from a higher vantage point. They were mutual stewards of life in this world, and were being summoned to eternal life, where there are no sexual distinctions (Gal. 3:28). There is a spiritual practicality involved also . . . "that your prayers be not hindered." Marital life must not be permitted to inhibit one's quest for glory!

Chapter 12

THE ROLE OF DIVINE INSTRUCTION

In the Word of God, particularly there is a noticeable absence of detailed instructions concerning every day life. This is particularly true in the writings of the Apostles. They

wrote of the requirement for meekness, but did not say how to be meek. They told husbands to be considerate, but did not say how to be considerate. They instructed us to perfect holiness in the fear of God, but did not tell us how to do it. There is a reason for this.

Addressing those in Christ, John wrote, “But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, you shall abide in Him” (I John 2:27). This declaration reveals much concerning the nature of the Kingdom of God.

The intent of these words is not to obviate instruction by godly men. Were that the case, the verse itself would be contradictory, for it was an inspired man that wrote it. Nor, indeed, does it teach us that every man is an island unto himself, receiving private revelations and insights from the “Father of lights.” John is here dealing with the perception of implications, and the consequent understanding of details. The “how to” of Kingdom life (which includes the resolution of earthly problems) is not taught by routine or discipline.

Candidly, there are no secret routines that guarantee domestic tranquility or peaceful social relationships. If that were the case, Jesus would certainly have made them known. He Himself did not get along with the Scribes, Pharisees, or Lawyers, as well as others that did not receive His words (Matt. 23:2-29; Luke 11:46-52; John 6:66). He encountered the “problem” of being misunderstood (Mark 9:32; Luke 18:34), and was once considered to be mentally unstable (Mark 3:21). The absence of problems is not an indication of either success or godliness!

Where it is possible, the resolution of earthly circumstances becomes a stewardship of men. On one occasion, Jesus refused to become involved in a family problem that involved the equitable distribution of an inheritance (Luke 12:13-14). In the matter of redemption, men are to “work out” their own “salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). In the “smaller matters” of life, judgment is to be employed (I Cor. 6:1-3). That judgment is associated with evaluation, contemplation, and the choice of good over evil. “Good,” in this case, is what contributes to Divine fellowship, while “evil” describes what militates against it.

Valid problem resolution consists, first, in setting our “affection on things above,” and seeking “first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Col. 3:1-3; Matt. 6:33). Then, with our vision dominated by eternal realities, we address the lesser things. In such an approach, man’s mind is employed, and Divine resources are joined to his own. This is the manner of the Kingdom.

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego confronted the problem of the fiery furnace, two alternatives faced them. They could “fall down and worship the image” set up by king Nebuchadnezzar as soon as they heard “the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltry, and dulcimer.” That would have saved them from being thrown into the furnace, and thus was one valid form of problem-resolution.

These three men, however, considered more than the circumstances of that day. They contemplated God and His good pleasure. Their reflection upon the Living God and their association with Him, prompted them to ignore the problem. They employed no genius in

dealing with it. They refused to think longer upon it, or to reason with the king concerning other possible alternatives. They refused to seek a solution to the dilemma. “We have no care to answer you in this matter,” they boldly announced.

God was “able” to deliver them, they confessed. But the ability of God was not the issue. If God chose to deliver them out of the furnace, they would accept it. “But if not,” they informed the king, “we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3:14-18). The outcome of their decision verified the correctness of their choice (Dan. 3:19-30).

While all of our difficulties are not remedied so wonderfully, they must all be approached in the same manner. The resolution is really not the preeminent consideration. Rather, the eternal purpose of God is to dominate our view, together with our participation in it.

Chapter 13

CONCLUSION

Truth, like God, is eternal. It is united in all of its aspects as God is united in all of His attributes. There is no contradiction in truth – no competition between the various expressions of truth. There is no such thing as “parallel truths” – a theological expression meant to describe two aspects of the truth that cannot be logically joined together. Expressions that cannot be joined together logically (as God considers logic [principles of reason]) are, of necessity, contradictory to each other. It is to be admitted that this logic may not be detected by some men. It is reasoning of another order, having its genesis in God Himself.

It is no more possible for truth to lack harmony than it is for God to lack consistency. It is, further, the unity of the truth that gives it liberating power. Were it possible to segment the truth and cause its parts to lack harmony, it would become spiritually impotent.

This is why it is foolish to ask if, for example, Muslims and Christians worship the same God. Their concepts of God radically differ. Their presentation of statements said to have come from God not only differ, but are opposed to one another. They cannot represent the same God. Further, those who ignorantly say we all worship the same God, only under different names, have not told the truth. They have only belched out some sayings they have heard from other ignorant men.

Some affirm that “Allah” is a valid name for God. They say that Arabic versions of the Bible use the word “Allah” for God, as though that buttressed their argument. The meaning of the word, as used by the Muslims, is “the Being Who comprises all the attributes of perfection.” Thus, it is reasoned that this word, used for Deity, is a valid name for God. But this is not so, for God has revealed Himself by His name (Ex 6:3; 15:3; 34:14; Psa 83:18; Isa 42:8; 47:4; Jer 10:16; 32:18) – and it is never said to have been “Allah.” He is further identified as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:15), and “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 11:31). These are unique identities that cannot be applied to any other purported God. The Muslims, for example, have Ishmael as the promised seed, not Isaac. Their God is “the God Abraham and Ishmael.” And, it is certainly not “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Other gods mentioned in the Scriptures are as follows. I have only included the names

that have meanings that could be applied to the true God. Yet, these names apply to false gods, and are never used to describe the true God.

1. "Adrammelech" (2 Kgs 17:31) means "glory, grandeur or power of the king."
2. "Anammelech" (2 Kgs 17:31) means "answer."
3. "Baal" (Judges 6:31) means "master, lord."
4. "Baali" means "my lord, lord over me."
5. "Chemosh" (1 Kgs 11:7) means "the powerful."
6. "Diana" (Acts 19:24) means "luminous, perfect."
7. "Hermes" or "Mercurius" (Acts 14:12) means "refuge."
8. "Jupiter" or "Zeus" (Acts 14:12) means "the father that helpeth."
9. "Milcom" (1 Kgs 11:5) means "their king."
10. "Molech" (Lev 18:31) means "king."
11. "Tammuz" (Ezek 8:14) means "concealed."

Just as these gods cannot be blended with the true God, so any words purported to have been given by them cannot be blended with the Word of God, or included in the Scriptures. This is because they are all gods described as follows: "They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat" (Psa 115:55-7).

"Truth," as it has been used in this series of devotions, is the exclusive expression of "the only true God" (John 17:3). Because He is "One," and "no variableness" is associated with Him, there is no contradictions in anything He has expressed in words.

This necessarily means that any and all denominations that claim to have been founded on the Word of God have misrepresented Scripture, and God as well. Nothing that God says can possibly produce a sect or a denomination. That is precisely why divisions, or factions, are a work of the flesh (Gal 5:20 ("seditions" [division] and "heresies" [a party])). All believers are admonished, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10). That admonition is a testimony to the singularity of the truth, and the absolute necessity of holding to it.