

THE VALUE OF TRUTH

People are drawn to things of value. Infants are drawn to their mothers for nourishment, care, and guidance; and, in the same way, we're drawn to things of value which give us guidance and happiness. Just like the infant, we'll love what we value the most.

We must be certain that we completely realize the great value of truth, because if we can recognize how priceless truth really is, we'll cling to it and love it as an immensely precious item. How can we know what is valuable?

Something is valuable because God says it's valuable.

The price paid for something doesn't necessarily determine its worth. Old wine, for example, brings high prices, but old wine has absolutely no value to me as a Christian because I have no interest in buying, selling, or drinking it. Concerning turning Jesus over to the chief priests, Judas asked them, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver" (Matthew 26:15). Just because God's Son was sold for about \$16 doesn't make Him worth only \$16! Does it? So the price paid for something doesn't necessarily determine its value.

The age of something, likewise, doesn't necessarily determine its worth. Is a ten year old dog worth more than a ten day old infant? Are the words of Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato more valuable than the words of Christ just because their words are older than Christ's? Of course not. So the age of something doesn't necessarily determine its value either.

So again, **something is valuable because or when God says it's valuable.** Men have made human life cheap by murdering millions in war after war. Humanistic thought has convinced the world that man is only an animal, the highest animal, perhaps, but only an animal. But God revealed the true worth of man through His Son. He told us that we're more important and more valuable than animals: "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear, therefore you are of more value than they" (Matthew 10:29-31). He also rhetorically asked, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matthew 16:26)?

We need to change our standard of value to fit God's system. The Jews killed Jesus due to faulty values: since they didn't reckon Him as the Christ, they were in error. Peter told them that "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36b). However, they evidently had a change of attitude as seen in verses 37 and 41: "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' ... Then, those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." See, they followed Jesus once they submitted to God's standard of values.

God has made truth valuable.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); we can see how 'the way' to 'life' is through 'truth' or Jesus! Since Jesus is the truth, we need to embrace Him and not let Him go for anything in the world: "Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them about your neck, and write them on the table of your heart" (Proverbs 3:3).

What is truth, this thing God has made so valuable? Wuest said that truth is "that which is unconcealed, unhidden, that which will bear scrutiny and investigation, that which is open..." (Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament, p. 86). Brown said, "Reverence for the truth demands openness towards it and submission to its leading.... Such openness to truth is required of those who worship the God of truth..." (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, p. 901).

Concerning Jesus statement that He is the truth (John 14:6), Brown stated, "First, truth is not abstract or supra-historical but revealed in the actual personal life of the Word made flesh.... Secondly, Christ is also the truth because he is the revelation of God, and therefore his own witness is valid.... Thirdly,

truth, like Jesus, also stands in opposition to deception or falsehood" (id., p. 892).

Further, because Jesus is truth, we can also know at least three things...

1. **He's the embodiment or the picture of truth:** God not only talks to man about Himself, but He also showed man what He's like through the person of Jesus Christ.
2. **He's the communicator of truth:** He Himself—His person and life—makes things perfectly clear. He revealed the ultimate source, meaning, and end of all things. He revealed the truth of man himself and of the world surrounding him. He showed man the right way to the truth and enables him to choose the right way to it.
3. **He's the liberator of truth: He sets men free from the great gulf which exists between man and God, between man and his world, and between man and man.** He sets man free from many of the frustrations which he constantly experiences. He frees man from the fears, weaknesses, and defects that plague him. God has indeed made truth priceless, we should, therefore, recognize it as such.

Since God knew we needed this valuable item, He had it recorded for us.

God's words are truth: "Your Word is truth," Jesus said speaking to His Father (John 17:17), and David conceded to this when he said to the Father, "Let Your mercies come also to me, O Lord—Your salvation according to Your word. So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I have hoped in Your ordinances. So shall I keep Your law continually, forever and ever" (Psalm 119:41-44).

We should, therefore, continue in Christ's Word or in His truth, for He Himself said, "If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed" (John 8:31), because "Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ...who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:17-18).

Where do we find God's Word? In the Bible, of course. Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, said, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (First Corinthians 14:37).

An author unknown to me once wrote...

I am the Bible, God's wonderful library. I am always, and above all, the truth!

To the weary pilgrim, I am a strong staff.

To those who sit in darkness, I am glorious light.

To those who stumble beneath heavy burdens, I am sweet rest.

To those who are sick in sin, I am healing strength and forgiveness.

To the discouraged, I am a glad message of hope.

To those who are distressed and tossed about by the storms of life, I am an anchor, sure and steadfast.

To those who search for salvation, I reveal the Savior of the world.

I am the Bible!

Due to its great worth, then, God went to the trouble required in order to have truth

recorded for us.

Truth is so valuable that men have died for it.

Christ's death established the New Testament: when "they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:33-34). Then we find what Jesus said about that shed blood in First Corinthians 11:25b: "This cup is the New Covenant in (or, ratified by) My blood." (Read also Hebrews 9:11-17.)

The martyrs died to preserve it: John revealed, "I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Revelation 17:6).

Men died to publish it for the world to read. "The true father of the English Bible is William Tyndale.... Tyndale formed the ambition which was to be his chief aim in life—to give the English people a translation of the Bible based not on the Latin, but on the original Greek.... By 1534-35, his translations, although not welcome as yet, were not so violently opposed by official England; and, it appeared as though the long fought contest might turn in his favor. But many Romanists were still determined to stamp out heresy. Tyndale was thus betrayed and imprisoned in 1534. In 1536, after spending months in prison, he was strangled and burned at the stake, crying, 'Lord, open the king of England's eyes'" (How We Got the Bible, Lightfoot, pp. 98-99). To these people the truth was more valuable than their very lives. That's pretty valuable. When we sacrifice something for truth, as these men did, it will become more valuable to us, too.

Why should and why would people do such a thing as sacrifice and die for truth? They knew the power of it. For example, this story is told of a preacher traveling on an airliner: During his flight, he heard the hostess coming down the aisle calling out, "Cocktail, Sir?" The preacher said most of the replies were, "Make mine a martini." The preacher said he was reading the Bible, and as the hostess approached him from the rear of the plane, she paused and said, "Tomato juice, Sir?" The preacher made this comment about that occurrence: "Now what other book could change a martini into tomato juice?"

So due to its great worth, men, as well as God's own Son, died for truth.

Truth is valuable because it's eternal.

Notice some verses from the Bible, the truth. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Peter wrote, "The Word of God...lives and abides forever" (First Peter 1:23). David wrote, "God...keeps truth forever" (Psalm 146:5-6).

People have tried to destroy truth, but still it stands, obviously by God's own providence. In AD 303, Diocletian issued an edict to destroy Christians and their sacred book: "An imperial letter was everywhere promulgated ordering the razing churches to the ground and the destruction by fire of the Scriptures and proclaiming that those who held high positions would lose all civil rights, while those in households, if they persisted in their profession of Christianity, would be deprived of their liberty.... The historic irony of this edict to destroy the Bible is that Constantine, the emperor following Diocletian, twenty-five years later commissioned Eusebius to prepare fifty copies of the Scriptures at the expense of the government" (Evidence That Demands A Verdict, J. McDowell, p. 23).

Voltaire, the noted French infidel who died in 1778, said that in one hundred years from his time Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. But what happened? Voltaire has passed into history, while the circulation of the Bible continues to increase in almost all parts of the world, carrying blessings wherever it goes.

Concerning the boast of Voltaire on the extinction of Christianity and the Bible in one hundred years, Geisler and Nix point out that "only fifty years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bible" (id. pp. 22-23)!

The Bible was written on material which perishes, but the truth has survived almost 2,000 years. They used papyrus, a crude type of paper made of the papyrus plant. They used parchment, animal skins prepared by being shaved and scraped. (Cf. Second Timothy 4:13.) And they used Vellum, calf skins, usually dyed purple. Despite the fact that the material on which the Bible was written was perishable, we still have an abundance of manuscripts today because it was copied and recopied through the years; that's what scribes were for.

A. T. Robertson, the author of the most comprehensive grammar of the New Testament Greek, wrote, "There are some 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, at least 1,000 for the other early versions, and over 4,000 Greek manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament. Besides all this, much of the New Testament can be reproduced from quotations of the early Christian writers." And he wrote this nearly 100 years ago, many years before the many more that have been discovered.

Though everything else in the universe may perish, the truth will still stand! The fact that it's eternal, therefore, makes it valuable!

Truth is valuable because it provides us eternal and spiritual life.

In John 6:63 Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." In John 8:32 He said, "You shall know the truth, and truth shall make you free." In John 15:3 He said, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." And in John 10:10 He said, "I have come that they [mankind] may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

Conclusion

So God teaches us that truth is indeed an immensely valuable item. Since He knew this, He allowed His Son to die to establish it and then had it recorded for us in writing by inspired men: for example, one of those men, Paul, wrote, "By revelation He (God) made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which, when you read, you may understand...)" (Ephesians 3:3-4).

Ever since the death of Christ for truth, people have continued to die for it and will likely continue to. Why? Because truth is eternal and the only thing which can save us from eternal destruction. Realizing the great value of truth, then, should give us the desire that Solomon encouraged his son to have: "Buy the truth and do not sell it" (Proverbs 23:23)!

We find the truth in God's Word or the Bible. So we need to read and study it with others and for ourselves so that we can have, as Paul put it, our "waist girded with truth" (Ephesians 6:14a).

[Leland Byars, 1985.]

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