

My Truth

Escaping the Errors of Our Ways

October 8, 2023

Today we're talking about *practicing* the *right righteousness*, in order to *turn* from the *errors* of our *own ways*. So answer this: **Is your truth the truth?**



Cuz if my truth isn't *the truth* I'm *toast*. But **that's a big thing now: my truth.**

Anybody remember my UCLA parking garage story? Returning from a night class; a car horn starts *blaring* on the level just *above* me. And the *big-city-people* can't *seem* to *stop* it. But *I'm* a *small-town wrecking yard boy*. I know how to *disconnect* a *horn*, and I'm *ready* to *help*. So I run up the *ramp* to the *rescue!* But the owner apparently *left*. Most cars had a hood latch in the grill. But this car was *new* and *nice*, with the *latch inside* and the *doors locked*. But the driver's wing window was open, so I let myself *in*. But I can't find the hood release. So I get on my knees, brush some broken glass aside, and lean in for a closer look. Now, **I was the hero in MY truth ... until THE truth broke in:** the wing window isn't *open*, it's *broken!* By a *thief!* Just a *couple* minutes *before!* And that *horn* is a *then-modern alarm!* And *security's coming!* And my hands are *up under* the *dash!* So I *dashed* to the nearest, *darkest, corner* and *hid* in the *shadows* ... only to *realize* that *this* is what the *thief* would've done when I *ran up* the *only ramp out!* So I *ran* to my car, *raced* home, and *really thanked* the Lord for *protecting* an *idiot* from *prison*. Cuz I don't think I could've convinced *anyone* that I was *that stupid*. But I *was!* I was *that stupid*. **My truth**, indeed!

That's what Paul would call **zeal without knowledge**. He writes about it, saying:

[The Israelites] are zealous for God, *but* their *zeal* is not *based on knowledge*. Since they did not know the *righteousness* that comes from God and sought **[His Word]** to *establish* their *own*, they did not submit to God's *righteousness*. – Romans 10:1-4 NIV

So **we need to practice the right righteousness**, that makes us *undeservedly holy*, **rather than the self-deceiving, self-righteousness** that makes us *unwittingly hollow*. It's not about *belief alone*, or just *saying* the *right things*. It's about *trusting*. And *trusting* is *all about practicing*.

For by one sacrifice He has made *perfect forever* those who are *being made holy*. – Hebrews 10:14 NIV

[Now] If you *know* that *He* is *righteous*, you may be *sure* that *everyone* who *practices righteousness* has been born of Him. **[Cuz we're talking about practicing]** – 1 John 2:29 ESV

No one *born of God* makes a *practice of sinning* ... he cannot *keep on practicing* *sinning* ... By this it is evident who are the *children of God*, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does *not practice righteousness* is *not born* of God – 1 John 3:9-10 ESV

[In fact] Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as *He* is righteous. [Whereas] Whoever makes a practice of sinning is [a child] of the devil – 1 John 3:6-8 ESV

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you [“who are being made holy”] may *not sin*. [Cuz we’re talking about our practice] *But* if anyone *does sin*, we [who are practicing righteousness] have an *Advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ [who happens to not only be *the Truth*, but] *the Righteous*. – 1 John 2:1 ESV



Cuz we’re *talking* about our *Savior*! One of life’s great joys is **when children mature beyond a parent-child relationship and become actual friends**. Well, the more we practice the *right* righteousness, the more *intimately* we walk with *our Father* as a *faithful friend*. Because, just like a mature son or daughter, **our appreciation deepens for what we couldn’t formerly comprehend**. Being *born* (again) of God is a *beginning*. **You’re either His redeemed child or you’re not**. But being *made holy* is a *journey*, because **friendship deepens as it grows**. As a true believer **you can’t become more of God’s child; but you can become a far better friend**. Cuz He’s the *friend of sinners*.

Did you know that Scripture says “truth fails”? Under certain conditions. You see, **we see things the way we want, even when it’s wrong**. It’s called Confirmation Bias. It’s a tendency to see only that which *confirms* our *beliefs* while *ignoring* anything that *contradicts*.

Remember when I was cruising through *Bellingham* late one *night*, years ago? As I drove through an intersection I noticed the stoplights were hung *backwards*. I thought: that’s *weird*. As I shot through the 2nd intersection, same thing! I thought: that’s *dangerous; somebody is really stupid*. *This* time **I was the victim in my truth ... until the truth hit me** at the 3rd intersection: *I’m stupid!* It’s a one way street! I reflexively slammed on the brakes, skidding sideways into the intersection, heart pounding. **My truth**, indeed! **We can sincerely cruise along the wrong way with deadly consequences**. Because, **my truth only works until it collides with the truth**. And when we enter the Word of *Truth* to support a *feeling, desire, or agenda* – rather than to *examine ourselves* and *seek the actual truth* – **we’ll find the proof we want, to believe the “truth” we want**. Which *blinds* us to the *actual truth* and makes us a *prey* for false teachers. Isaiah said:

Woe to those who [ignorantly or knowingly] call *evil good*, and *good evil*; who put *darkness* for *light*, and *light* for *darkness* – Isaiah 5:20 NKJ

They trust in *empty words* ... [and then] We look for *light*, but there is *darkness!* For *brightness*, but we walk [unaware] in *blackness!* ... For truth is fallen in the street, and [true] *equity* cannot enter [the picture]. So truth fails, and he who [rightly] *departs* from *evil* makes himself a *prey*. – Isaiah 59:4-15 NKJ

A *prey* to those with *zeal* without *knowledge*. Because **truth fails when it’s mishandled**. And it’s mishandled if and when we *pick* and *choose* what we *want* to *read* to *believe* to *receive* to *live by*, while *willfully, ignorantly, imposing* our own biased ways on God’s Word. Paul said that those are those that *are sincerely zealous for God*, “*but their zeal is not based on knowledge*”. **It’s sincere and passionate, but mishandled and misdirected, and therefore fails**. But:

He who speaks [THE] truth declares [the RIGHT] righteousness – Proverbs 12:17 NKJ

[Whereas] The backslider in *heart* will be *filled* with his own ways – Proverbs 14:14 NKJ

[Which is why] It is *not good* to have zeal without knowledge ... [because] A man's *own folly* ruins his life, yet his heart *rages* against the *Lord*. – Proverbs 19:2-3 NIV

Because, **based on sincere but biased, mishandled, empty words, the Lord's to blame!** Until I saw my *own way* for what it was, I could *only* conclude, by *my truth* that Bellingham signal-light installers are *idiots!* But once I saw *the truth behind* those lights, and the *error* of my *own way*, I *hit the brakes* so hard it *spun* me *around* and left *skid marks!* Ever hear someone say: **it doesn't matter what someone believes, as long as they're sincere?** Well, I beg to differ. As I've learned firsthand:

He who trusts in *himself* is a *fool*, [like me barreling through the *first two* intersections] but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe. – Proverbs 28:26 NIV

You see, **God gave His Word to His Children.** And it did *not* require them to *earn* their *own* salvation, but **to trust in His mercy,** so that *righteous obedience* would *flow* from *joyful gratitude.* **But they ended up using His Word to quantify their righteousness.** More than once they had to be reminded that whenever it comes to God's blessings:

It is *not* because of *your* righteousness – Deuteronomy 9:6 NIV

And yet, like *many* of us, they continued to resist the *right* righteousness of *seeking the truth,* and instead: "Sought to establish their own". Which is why **we're given the very same warning:**

When the kindness and love of God our Savior *appeared,* He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His *mercy.* He saved us through the washing of rebirth ["by *one sacrifice*"] and [ongoing] *renewal* by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior ... And I want you to *stress these things,* so that those who *have trusted* in God *may be* careful to *devote* themselves to *doing* what is *good.* – Titus 3:4-8 NIV



Devoting ourselves to doing good is a response to God's mercy, not a means to it. Which means **doing good must be rooted in receiving grace.** Cuz the *more* we *receive,* the *more* our *love* will *grow* **until obedience becomes a byproduct of gratitude.** I saw a T-shirt that said: "Jesus Loves You! (and in small print) Then again He loves everybody." The humor plays on a tendency to feel less valuable if we don't somehow stand out from the crowd – which tempts us to compare ourselves to those we feel free to *judge,* as being *beneath* us – which is dangerous when it comes to our righteousness. For instance, **where are you on a scale of 0-10 for righteousness?** Two? Three? Four? Well, the *devil's* a zero, so Hitler's gotta be a *one* or *two,* right? I mean, he's *Hitler,* but he's not the *devil.* "Hmm. Hitler's a *one* or *two?* I guess I'm like a *five.*" But *drug pushers* who sell to *kids* gotta be like a three or *four.* I mean, they're *drug pushers,* but they're not *Hitler.* And *where* do you fit *kind-hearted atheists,* or *half-hearted Christians?*

See how **we eventually and fairly easily get faithful followers to a nine?** And if you *tithe, attend church, pray, read Scripture, serve in ministry, and give to the Philippines* (beyond your regular giving), you *gotta* be like a 9.7! And *that's* the danger of driving this *direction* in the *dark!* Cuz **even if you're trying to be humble, you can't help but see you're near the top in your truth.** For all I know, Hitler *is* a one or two; and you may well *be* a 9.7 ... **but the scale isn't 0-10. It's 0-infinity!**



All of a sudden **there's not much difference between a one and a 9.7.** But until we submit *our* way of establishing our own righteousness to *the* Way, which is *Jesus*, **we'll define our righteousness in ways that deceive ourselves rather than drive ourselves to our knees in His light.** Because, if you're a *nine point something*, what's the *big deal?* Well:

[God] made *His* light shine in *our* hearts to give us *the* light of the *knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of *Christ*. *But* we have this treasure in jars of clay [in order] to show that this *all-surpassing* power is from *God* and *not* from *us*. – 2 Corinthians 4:6-7 NIV

We gotta get it through our *thick head* and *hard heart* that **we're profoundly lovable, but completely unacceptable – like a lovable child sprayed by a skunk.** I grew up *fully aware* that I was a *very much loved little stinker*; know why? Anybody remember those personalized mugs all the *kids* had in the 60s? I still have mine. But it didn't say "Bruce" ... it said "Little Stinker"! And it's *because our* Father gave *His* kids *freewill*, that **we need to be continually renewed, reset, and recalibrated.** And He did this because **He's determined to have a family**, and to have *all us little stinkers* in it!

The Lord, the Holy One of Israel, saves you, and He says ... "I am the One who wipes away *all* your sins. I *do* this to please *myself*. I will *not* remember your sins. But *you* should remember *Me*. Let's *meet* together and decide what is *right*." – Isaiah 43:14, 25-26 ERV

If you're a *genuine* child of our Father-God, **you can't stink of sin without something inside alerting you to the fact that something doesn't smell right.** Well, *tomato juice* might work with *skunk*, but an *ongoing washing* of God's *Word* is *required* for those practicing the *right* righteousness. Because:

[Christ] loved the church and gave *Himself* for her, ["by one sacrifice"] that He might *sanctify* and *cleanse* her with the [ongoing] washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a *glorious* church, not having *spot* or *wrinkle* or any such *thing*, but that she should be [made] *holy* and without *blemish*. – Ephesians 5:25-27 NKJ

We're all heading in wrong ways in ways we're unaware of. So we need to *focus* our *zeal* on *examining* ourselves in *light* of God's *Word*, and *step* on the *gas*, or *slam* on the *brakes*, or whatever it takes to make an immediate *course-correction*. Because, like Paul:

This is my prayer [for you]: that your *love* [for your Father] may *abound more and more* in *knowledge* and *depth* of *insight* – Philippians 1:9 NIV

Cuz we're talking about practicing ... the truth ... with zeal!

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.