

Chapter Four: Walk in Truth

Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Truth is defined as “conformity to fact or actuality” (Berube 1184). It is, therefore, the opposite of that which is false. By definition, truth is not subjective—that which is truth (fact) for one is truth (fact) for all, no matter the time, place or situation. The earth, for example, is and always has been a sphere. Even though man once believed the earth was flat, that belief did not negate the fact (the truth) the earth was, and is, a sphere. Truth is truth regardless of perspective. Though Pilate may not have been sincere in his question, we must sincerely ask, “What is truth?” Since we are encouraged to walk in truth, we need to know what truth is. As we continue to discuss truth and walking in it let us consider: 1) The Word of God is Truth (John 17:17); 2) We Must Walk in Truth (2 John 4); and 3) The Truth Brings Salvation (John 8:32).

While praying to the Father Jesus said, “thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Truth, *alēthia* (G: 225), means “truth, truthfulness; corresponding to reality” (Strong 1589). Our God is “a God of truth” (Deuteronomy 32:4); he can not lie (Titus 1:2). The Psalmist writes, “thy law is the truth” and “all thy commandments are truth” (Psalm 119:142, 151). Furthermore, Paul repeatedly refers to the Gospel as “the word of truth” (Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; Galatians 2:5, 14). God’s Word, spoken or written, is true and trustworthy—it is fact. We, then, can rely on the Word of God, the Scriptures, to give us the knowledge we need to be with God in heaven. More so, we *must* rely on the Word of God for if it is truth, then everything that contradicts God’s Word must be false and unreliable. “Authority rests with truth in any area, and especially the truth of God” (Hutton 27). As truth, the Word of God is the only standard by which we will be judged.

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. (John 12:48-49)

The Word of God, spoken and written, is truth. It is reliable and trustworthy. It and it alone is the true standard by which we will be judged.

Since the Word of God, the truth, is the standard by which we will be judged, we have a responsibility to walk in that truth. The Scriptures do not record a specific command to “walk in truth,” but the apostle John does make reference to such a command. In his letter to the “elect lady” he writes, “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father” (2 John 4). John also writes to Gaius, “I have no greater joy than to

hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). Walk/walking, *peripateō* (G: 4043), refers to their conduct of life (Strong 1636). The things we do, the choices we make, our actions are our walk. God expects us to live in the truth. Since the Gospel is truth (Ephesians 1:13), it should be a part of our daily lives. In reference to how we should live John elsewhere uses the expression “of the truth” (1 John 3:19). Jesus used the same expression in response to Pilate’s question about truth (John 18:37). Paul uses different words to convey the same meaning: “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27). Conversation, *politeuomai* (G: 4176), literally signifies to be a member of a city or state, a citizen (Vine 103). Figuratively, however, it refers to “conduct characteristic of heavenly ‘citizenship’” (Vine 103). So, like *peripateō* (walk), it refers to how we live our lives. Becometh, *axiōs* (G: 516), means “suitably; worthily, in a manner worthy of” (Thayer 53). Paul is encouraging the Philippians to lead a manner of life worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Though the specific command to “walk in truth” is not recorded in Scripture, the concept and an allusion to the command is certainly present. We, therefore, are obligated to walk in truth.

To walk in truth, to live the Gospel, is first to know the truth. God desires everyone “to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Knowledge, *epignōsis* (G: 1922), “denotes ‘exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition’” (Vine 348). Truth can be known, and God expects us to know it and recognize it. This is why Paul instructed Timothy, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). We must study God’s Word in order to be approved by God. To study, *spoudazō* (G: 4704), is not just reading the Bible or casually attending Bible classes. It means “to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, endeavor, give diligence” (Vine 169). It indicates eagerness and doing our best (Strong 1643). Study requires action and effort. Paul stresses this point by adding the word “workman,” *ergatēs* (G: 2040). It means “a laborer, one who does (something)” (Strong 1612). Only through active study and effort can we stand unashamed before God. The implication is a lack of proper study should cause shame. Proper study includes “rightly dividing the word of truth.” “Rightly dividing” is translated from *orthotomeō* (G: 3718), which literally means “to cut straight” and, figuratively speaking, indicates “rightly dealing with a thing” (Vine 178). Here, that thing is the “word of truth,” which we defined earlier as the Word of God, the Gospel. The idea is to handle the Scriptures correctly and to use them to guide us on a straight path (Strong 1631). Taking verses or passages out of context is not rightly dividing the Word of God. Even if we use a passage to teach a doctrine

taught elsewhere in Scripture, but not in that particular passage, it is a misuse of Scripture. Rightly dividing the Word of God is to allow the Scriptures to say what they mean and mean what they say. This is proper study and only through such study can we gain the knowledge of truth God expects us to have.

In order to walk in truth we must also obey the truth. Simply knowing the truth is not enough. Paul rebuked the Galatians for not obeying the truth (Galatians 3:1). He also warned the Thessalonians that the unrighteous perish “because they received not the love of the truth...That they all might be damned who believed not the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, 12). Received, *dechomai* (G: 1209), means “to receive by deliberate and ready reception of what is offered” (Vine 511). We are all offered the truth, but not everyone comes to a knowledge of that truth through proper study. Some reject the truth all together while others only accept pieces of it. Either way, the unrighteous are those who are offered the truth yet refuse to accept it. Since they do not accept the truth they do not and can not believe it. Believe, *pisteuō* (G: 4100), represents more than accepting or acknowledging something. It means “to believe, put one’s faith in, trust, with an implication that actions based on that trust may follow” (Strong 1636). Belief requires action. True belief, therefore, is accomplished through word and deed, thus obedience. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). How can we truly believe (in word and in deed) what we do not know? How can we do the will of God if do not study the Word of God? This is why a knowledge of the truth must precede obedience to the truth. If we want to walk in truth as God has commanded us, then we had better study the Word of God (the Gospel of truth, the Gospel of Christ) in order to know it and obey it.

Walking in truth brings salvation. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Know, *ginōskō* (G: 1097), means “to know, come to know, recognize, understand” (Strong 1599). “In the NT *ginōskō* frequently indicates a relationship between the person ‘knowing’ and the object known; in this respect, what is ‘known’ is of value or importance to the one who knows” (Vine 346). Certainly, this is the case in respect to knowing the truth we can only obtain from God. We must value the truth and have a relationship with it, hence the commands to study and walk in truth. Jesus encouraged the believing Jews not only to know the truth but also to “continue in my word” (verse 31). “My word” is synonymous with “the truth” in the next verse. Continue, *menō* (G: 3306), means “to persevere” and is used “of him who cleaves, holds fast, to a thing” (Thayer 399). Jesus just proclaimed he is both deity

and the Messiah. His words in verses thirty-one and thirty-two are directed to those who “believed on him” (verses 30-31). Jesus was calling on them not just to believe then, but to continue to believe on him and follow him. To know the truth is not a one-time deal but something that “begins and continues” (Strong 1626). Such an abiding knowledge of the truth will make us free, *eleuthero* (G: 1659). This means “to set free, liberate, cause someone to receive liberty or freedom” (Strong 1607). The context of the verse shows Jesus is referring to a freedom “from the dominion of sin” (Thayer 204). Immediately after Jesus said the truth would make them free, “They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:33-34). Clearly Jesus is speaking of spiritual bondage, not physical. Paul uses the same imagery in Romans 6:17-18: “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Notice they “were,” (past tense) the servants of sin, but are “now” (present tense) made free from that bondage. How? They accepted the truth of the Gospel and obeyed it. By doing so, they cast off their chains to sin and became servants of righteousness. To be clear, this does not mean Christians become sinless. The difference is we no longer “serve sin” (verse 6) and do not allow sin to “reign” (verse 12) or “have dominion” (verse 14) over us. Sin no longer dominates our lives; we do not walk in sin. We were enslaved but are now free; whereupon we choose to serve righteousness. Those who walk in truth can and will be relieved of the oppression of a sin-filled life. Knowing and obeying the truth brings salvation, if knowledge and obedience continue.

We must be sure to realize the truth is our only means of salvation. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Earlier we defined truth as the Word of God (John 17:17) and connected the Word of God with the truth of the Gospel (Ephesians 1:13). Here we make a connection to Christ himself. The Gospel, the truth, is the “good news” of Christ. Paul defines the Gospel as the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Why is that good news? Because the death, burial and resurrection of Christ bring us salvation. “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). Clearly stated, the Gospel saves. Why? Because of the blood of Christ. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:8-9). Justified, *dikaioō* (G: 1344), means “to judge, declare, pronounce,

righteous and therefore acceptable” (Thayer 150). Through the blood of Christ we receive “the legal and formal acquittal from guilt by God as Judge, the pronouncement of the sinner as righteous” (Vine 339). Justification only comes, however, to the faithful. Earlier in the chapter Paul writes, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). This justification allows us to have peace with God, to be saved from his wrath, but only through faithful obedience. In the next chapter Paul reminds the Romans they were “baptized into his death” (6:3) and “buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (6:4). Only through baptism do we come into contact with the blood of Christ in order to receive justification. It is in baptism our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16), thus making us right in the eyes of God. Our justification, though, is conditional; we must be obedient. Paul said the Gospel saves “if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you” (1 Corinthians 15:2). This expression is equal to walking in truth—an abiding knowledge coupled with continued obedience. “The idea is, that they were saved by this [the Gospel] or would be, if they faithfully retained or held the doctrine as he delivered it; if they observed it, and still believed it” (Barnes 785). Justification requires continued faith, which requires continued obedience. Thereby the blood of Christ removes the guilt of sin and allows us to stand righteous before God. Therefore, Jesus states, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Jesus is the truth, the Word made flesh (John 1:1-5, 14), the Gospel. As the only source of truth, Christ is our only means of salvation. No one can approach God but through Christ. He alone is the way that leads to life. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

God has commanded us to walk in truth. The Word of God is truth. The Gospel of Christ is truth. Christ, the Word made flesh, is truth. To walk in truth is to study to know and obey the Gospel, continuing in it to make the truth a part of our daily lives. Only then can we be made free from the bondage of sin, freed through the blood of Christ, who is the only way that leads to life. What is truth? “It is the truth of the Gospel, the revealing Word of the Father, present in Jesus Christ and illuminated by the Spirit, which we must welcome in faith, so that it may transform our lives” (Leon-Defour 621).

“Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name” (Psalm 86:11).

Questions:

1. Define truth in your own words.

a. Why can truth not be subjective?

b. Why is truth the same for everyone?

2. How does the Bible refer to truth?

a. What did Jesus say was truth (John 17:17)?

b. What did the Psalmist call truth?

c. How did Paul refer to the Gospel?

3. What will judge us in the last day (John 12:48-49)?

4. Where is there a reference to a command to walk in truth?

5. What does our conversation signify (Philippians 1:27)?

6. From 1 Timothy 2:4 & 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 12: What are two aspects of walking in truth?

7. What is the result of walking in truth?

a. How does the truth make us free? _____

b. What condition does this require?

c. Who is our only means of salvation?

d. How are we justified? _____

8. Explain in your own words what it means to walk in truth.
