



“TRUTH HAS FALLEN IN THE STREET”

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Greetings and welcome to Let the Bible Speak. It's good to be with you this week for another bible study together. Thanks for joining me. If you're just discovering our program, I hope you'll make it a part of each week. I promise you will never hear us ask for money or try to sell you anything. We're brought to you each week on this channel by the local church solely in the interest of spreading the gospel and teaching the truth of God's word. Speaking of truth, is that what you are looking for? I think nearly anybody would say that they do not want to be lied to and that they only want to know the truth, especially when it comes to weighty matters such as pertain to life, death, and eternity. The heart is deceitful, though, and history, and more importantly, the word of God shows us that truth is not what many are seeking.

Isaiah 59:12-15 says: “For our transgressions are multiplied before You, And our sins testify against us; For our transgressions are with us, And as for our iniquities, we know them: In transgressing and lying against the LORD, And departing from our God, Speaking oppression and revolt, Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter. So truth fails, And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him That there was no justice.”

These sad words describe the state of Israel in Isaiah's day. Here, the Holy Spirit personifies truth, along with righteousness and justice, as unwelcome visitors in Israelite life. Their sins had closed the gates of the city to truth and right. The New Testament teaches that the same condition exists in sinful and stubborn hearts today. We all claim to want the truth, but our actions often tell a different story. Why does mankind so stubbornly resist that which Jesus said can 'set us free'? There are several reasons, and I want to consider a few of them with you today.

Most of Isaiah's prophecy is devoted to condemning the sins of God's people at that time. The final portion primarily concerns God's promise to redeem. But that glittering story of redemption is cast upon

the velvet black background of a sinful nation. Sin and wickedness ruled the day, and anyone who loved righteousness was in the minority, hated, and oppressed. The prophet says that truth itself had fallen in the street. That is symbolic language, personifying truth as a person who had fallen or stumbled in the street and was left behind by the rest of the nation. They, in other words, had left behind the ancient principles revealed to them at Sinai and were practicing their own subjective morality instead of accepting the absolute and timeless truth of God. And when truth is abandoned by the majority, those who do recognize and hold to the truth are despised and persecuted. Isaiah says that because truth had fallen and failed, those who repent and turn from evil 'make themselves a prey'. In other words, they become an object of scorn and spite by others. It's a sad day in any society, any home, or even any church when 'truth falls in the street' and when even the professing people of God resent those who stand up for and practice the truth; those who refuse to compromise with error and sin. That's the way things were in ancient Israel 600 years before Christ, and that's the way we find things in our world today.

When truth is not the standard, you cannot have uprightness and justice. A society rots and decays when truth falls in the street, and one person's idea of religion and morality is as good as the next person's. Anything not based upon truth is doomed to fail. So, the truth is precious, and we should desire it above all else. Solomon, in all his wisdom and speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it..." It is a rare and precious commodity, and consequently, a costly one. It will require much of you or me to obtain and possess the truth. It won't be popular. You will be in the minority. It will be inconvenient at best, and even dangerous at worst. But it is worth it because at the end of the day, lies fail and truth stands.

Why, then, is truth so unpopular? And it is. The apostle Paul said that many live under a strong delusion and will be condemned in the Day of Judgment (the day when all men will be judged by the truth) because they never loved the truth. He wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Why would people love and choose a lie? Why is the devil (the father of lies, according to Jesus in John 8:44) so successful in convincing people of lies and holding them in the bondage of sin and error? Wouldn't every person want the truth? Isn't it foolish to choose to be lied to and refuse to believe what is true? When people refuse to face the facts in everyday life, we would say that person is either unintelligent, delusional, or psychologically troubled. Jesus so famously said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) Jesus clearly says that there is such a thing as truth and that we can know it. It's readily available in His word. And it is freeing to stand in the sunlight of truth instead of groping in the shadows of ignorance and error. So, why don't more people seek the truth? I would like to suggest a few reasons why truth has such a hard time finding its way into the hearts of people.

First, because TRUTH REQUIRES HUMILITY. One of the primary reasons we are subject to delusion is because of our prideful desire to be our own master. We therefore resist the will of another being imposed upon us. We have referred many times, over the years, to the Old Testament story of Naaman, the Syrian general who contracted leprosy and went to the prophet Elisha seeking a cure. When he finally got to Elisha's house, the message he heard was not what he expected. Being the man of importance and authority that he was accustomed to being, he expected Elisha to come out in great pomp and circumstance and ceremoniously heal him. Elisha's message was much more humiliating, and to add to that, it was delivered not by Elisha himself, but by a mere messenger: 'Go and dip yourself seven times in the Jordan River,' and you will be healed. Well, Naaman was livid. Why? The answer is in his response to the messenger. It says in 2 Kings 5:11-12, "But Naaman became furious, and went away

and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So, he turned and went away in a rage." You see, he had already constructed in his mind what should happen and how the prophet of God should speak and act. When God's instructions were different than what seemed natural and even flattering to himself, he rebelled and stormed away until others reasoned with him and persuaded him to submit to the will of God.

Naaman's problem is the primary problem with many of us. Because of our upbringing, family, or cultural tradition, or simply our desires, we form in our mind what we think Christianity should be, and that becomes the standard instead of letting God speak through His word and direct us in what to think, say, and do. Are you truly seeking biblical truth? Are you, for example, content with your religious course, or with the church you are a part of, because of some other reason than "this is what the bible has led me to believe, be, and practice?" Have you ever truly set out on a mission to discover the true church Christ instituted and how the New Testament reveals it was formed, what it practiced, and how? What it looks like in the bible compared to the many offerings of man's invention that surround us today? Often, our prejudice and pride prevent us from doing so. Most people won't do that. They are content with their parents' religion. They are confident in their religious tradition first, because it is what is familiar and comfortable, and second, and even more importantly, it is one of the hardest things for any of us to do, to say that we have been wrong; to admit that we have been misled, or ignorant; or even worse, to admit that we have been rebellious. Finding and accepting the truth requires humility because it comes from outside of ourselves, and we would rather see things as the way we want them to be or think they should be instead of how they really are.

Second, truth not only requires humility, but it also requires **ASSIDUITY**. That is, persistence and diligence; the willingness to put in the work; the careful attention and concern to attain something. There is a proverb that says, "truth lies at the bottom of a well", meaning that one must be willing to dig deeply to get to it. Since the first lie was spoken by Satan at the beginning of time, the world has been filled with the fog of temptation, deception, error, and, consequently, sin. It's not easy to cut through all of that to find the pure and simple truth. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:2-4, "But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." The devil is constantly at work to blind and deceive us and keep us away from the saving truth of God's word. He uses a myriad of tools and tactics to blind the eyes of men and women to the truth and keep them enveloped in error. It takes a sincere, ready, and eager heart to find the truth. Now, that's not because the truth is some complex and incomprehensible thing that only highly intellectual people can understand. No, not at all! The bible says of the teachings of Jesus that "the common people heard him gladly." It was primarily the scholars and doctors of Israel who were blind to the truth and rejected Jesus. It was those who set themselves up as the authorities and interpreters of the law who failed to see the Christ in the scriptures that they claimed to know so well. It's not because some abstract and mysterious miracle or direct operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary to interpret the scripture, because that isn't the case either. The people on the Day of Pentecost well understood and believed what Peter preached and desired to obey it before they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, according to Acts 2:36-41. Why did they finally see the truth? Because when the gospel was confirmed and preached, they were honest enough to believe it. The famine of believing the truth is not because of the nature of the truth but because of the condition of sinful man. "Seek and you will find,"

Jesus said in Matthew 7:7. The problem we have is that we are not willing to search and make the necessary sacrifice to find and buy the truth. If we are not careful, we become lazy and careless instead of being like the ancient Bereans who “searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things are so.” (Acts 17:11) Finding truth requires picking up a shovel and with a ready and willing mind and sincere heart thrusting that shovel into the soil of God’s word saying, “Speak Lord, your servant heareth.”

Third, truth requires CONFORMITY. Truth is not just a concept. The quest for truth is not merely an academic exercise. I know some people who love education just for the sake of education itself. There’s nothing inherently wrong with that; in fact, I admire someone who dedicates themselves to enriching their knowledge and becoming a more intelligent, wise, and insightful person. The problem is that many are like those Paul spoke of in 2 Timothy 3:7, who are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Particularly when it comes to theological education, if the object of learning is not to know God better and do His will more perfectly, then beware of that person. The truth can be obtained by anyone, great or small, and the irony is, it is the small or simple (in the eyes of the world) who are more likely to find it. The brilliant apostle Paul even said in 1 Corinthians 1:26-27, “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;” No, the reason people refuse the truth is because it results in changes than many don’t want to make. The Savior said in John 3:20-21, “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” Because of their evil desires, Paul said the ancient Gentiles “exchange the truth of God for the lie and worshiped the creature instead of the Creator.” (Romans 1:25) When we discover the truth, we’re to walk in it, (2 John 1:4) we are to practice it, (1 John 1:6) and we are to obey it. (Galatians 3:1) One can hear the truth, even know the truth but unless we obey the truth, we have rejected the truth.

And fourth, truth requires not only humility, assiduity, and conformity, but also LOYALTY. The truth is costly. “Buy the truth...” said Solomon. Mat 13:45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” Underscore that phrase: he “sold ALL THAT HE HAD”. Truth comes at high price that many a person simply will not pay. It’s easier to believe the lie. It’s easier to go with the flow and remain in step with everyone else. It’s easier to avoid the conflict and to compromise with the world around us. The story says that the simple little song, “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back...” was written based on the dying words of a missionary in India. He bravely spoke those words when his own life was being threatened if he didn’t denounce his faith. One by one, his persecutors shot his children and then his wife, but the man continued to say, “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back. Though none go with me, I still will follow. No turning back, no turning back. The world behind me, the cross before me, no turning back, no turning back.” And so, the archer lifted his bow and flew an arrow into the heart of that man who died refusing to renounce and compromise the truth. That’s a price most wouldn’t pay. In fact, they won’t even pay a far lesser price for the truth because it encroaches on their own will and way of life or religious preference, etc.

That’s why truth finds itself fallen in the street. But friend, remember, when all is said and done, truth will always win, and error will always fail. The English poet Coventry Patmore wrote: “When all its work is down, the lie shall rot. The truth is great and shall prevail, When none cares whether it prevails or not.” And that’s so true. We live in a world bent toward falsehood and evil. The cost of finding, believing, and obeying the truth is great. It will cost you convenience. It will cost you friendships. It may cost you family relationships. It may cost you a career. It may cost you an earthly fortune and your future. It may even cost you your life. But just remember, it is worth it, because when eternity dawns,

truth will remain standing, and every lie will be exposed and destroyed. “All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8) The broad way will end in death, but the narrow path of truth will lead to eternal life. Would you be willing to leave the popular and convenient way of life behind today and follow the truth? Do you have the virtue today to accept the truth and follow it regardless of the cost? Do you have the courage to leave behind religious tradition and preference to embrace the Lord’s way and His alone? Or in your life, has truth fallen in the street?

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