



THE TREASURE OF TRUTH

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I have several friends who like to swap and trade things. It seems they're always buying something with the intention of turning around and selling it. So, of course, they're careful not to pay too much for whatever it is, because they want to be able to flip it, to make a profit of some kind. There are others who buy something, and they pay a very high price for it, maybe thinking they'll keep it, but they don't keep it for very long because they don't like it like they thought they would, or they just don't use it that much. So, it ends up in a rummage sale or being taken to Goodwill. And then, there are things which are incredibly valuable. So much so, that the average person may never be able to make the investment to buy them. And when those things are bought, the owner wouldn't even consider parting with it. It becomes a very precious thing to them. There are some things on the earth today that are so valuable, their worth is almost unimaginable. It is difficult to put a price tag on them. That, of course, is true of some of the intangible things in life. In fact, nowhere is that truer than when it comes to things eternal and unseen. **Proverbs 23:23 "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also, wisdom, and instruction, and understanding."** Solomon is telling us that the truth is a precious commodity that carries a very high price tag. And once we have it, if we truly realize its worth to us, there is no amount of money that would persuade us to part with it. That is the subject of our study today: THE TREASURE OF TRUTH, after a song from the congregation.

We're living in an age of a constant flow of information. In fact, we have faster and greater access to knowledge and facts than ever before in the history of the world. Ironically though, we're facing a famine of truth. Not much value is placed upon truth today. The past century or more can be described as the postmodern era: the age where people tell us there really is no such thing as truth, or at best, truth is relative to the person who believes it. In other words, what is true for you is true for you, and what's true for me is what's true for me, and there is no such thing as a universally accepted and absolute standard of truth. The result is few people are really concerned about truth and that's just as true in religion as it is the secular world. How many people today set out to find the Lord's church for example, with their single focus being on finding the truth? They want to find a church with this or that. A church with a youth program or a church with exciting music or a church with a trendy preacher or a

church with a popular social network. But very few set out to weed through the sea of confusion we have in modern Christianity in search of truth. Instead, we shrug, and say, it doesn't really matter... However, Solomon in his proverb affirms that truth is attainable, it is desirable, and it is valuable. He says, *"Buy the truth, and sell it not..."*

Jesus spoke of the truth as it pertained to the kingdom of heaven in that way. **Matthew 13:44-46** **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."** Both brief parables culminate in the same overall truth. The first refers to a man who finds a treasure. He finds a treasure when he is confronted with the kingdom of Christ, and he immediately esteems it as a valuable thing, and he invests in it. In fact, he invests everything that he has to safeguard it and keep it in his possession. Now, the merchant who purchased the costly pearl had set out on a mission to *find* pearls, and he found one that was more valuable than all the others, and he bought it at the expense of everything he possessed. Both parables tell us several things about the truth of Christ's kingdom. First, they tell us that a person needs to have some appreciation for its value, or else he'll casually pass it by. Both men immediately recognized what they found, and they set out to buy it for their own. Another thing the parables teach us is that the truth doesn't come cheap. It comes at great cost. These men had to spend everything they had, and that merely represents the fact that true service to God comes only at great sacrifice on our part.

The rich young ruler was told by Jesus that keeping the Ten Commandments wasn't enough. He had to relinquish his hold on all the riches that he loved so much in order to be saved (**Mark 10:17-22**). The Bible emphasizes the fact that the truth costs us something. And a religion that doesn't require anything isn't worth anything. Solomon implied in our text that the truth must be bought, and at a high price. That high price is often great sacrifice. Perhaps it's the price of inconvenience. It can be the price of ridicule or even persecution. It can be the price of having to turn your back on something that you believed and been a part of all your life. That can be very difficult. That can be an incredibly hard step for someone to take, but such is the price of truth.

What makes truth so expensive? What makes it such a valuable commodity? There are several factors in the economies of the world that determine an item's value. The first is, its availability. The less of something that there is, the more expensive that thing becomes. That's Economics 101. When the price goes up at the gas pump, one of the usual suspects is a higher demand for oil. When people drive more or refineries are refining less, then the market drives the price of oil up and we pay more for gas. If you could go out into any old stream of water and pan gold, then gold wouldn't be so expensive. Let something be found in abundance, and it can usually be purchased rather inexpensively. Spiritual commodities are not that different. For example, the Bible calls the blood of Christ *"precious."* But why was Jesus' blood *precious*? It's because He was the only lamb without spot or blemish. He was the only sinless human being to ever live, so you might say in the market of souls, His blood could purchase what no other blood could. It's rare, one of a kind. The truth is the same way. One thing that makes truth so precious and rare is that it's not being made anymore. Truth is out of print. It's out of production! Do you know there is no such thing as NEW TRUTH? Truth is what is. You can't manufacture it or replace it. Otherwise, it was never truth to begin with. Someone said a few years ago that 1,000 books per day are published. They also said that 3,000 pages of information are being printed off every second. Did you know that not one word of that adds to the supply of truth? Those writings may include truth, repeat truth, illustrate truth, deny truth, but not one bit of it adds any truth to the world or removes it. The

truth is the truth and that's it. Correspondingly, the truth is a rare commodity in the exchange of thoughts and ideas today. In fact, we have cheapened whatever concept we have in our minds of truth with the notion that 'you believe whatever you want, and I'll believe whatever I want, and it really doesn't matter what the Bible says about it because everybody has their own interpretation of the Bible anyway, so as long as you're sincere, nothing else matters.' Have you ever thought about how that cheapens the truth? There are millions of doctrines in the world today but most of them don't represent the true teaching of the Bible, and are therefore, not worth anything. One is as good as the next when it comes to teachings that are not found in God's Word. And, you know, if you can't find one that you like, you just keep looking until you find one that might suit you. The truth though, is a precious commodity because it is so exclusively unique and rare.

I Samuel 3:1 says "And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." Now, when that was written, it had been some time since God had spoken anything to His people. And Samuel became the first in a long line of prophets after the period of silence on the part of God. So, what revelation they had from God was considered a *precious* thing. Paul tells us that in this age of the world, God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. **Hebrews 1:1-2 "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds..."** Christ appointed His twelve apostles who lived in the first century to be His ambassadors or messengers, through whom He would reveal the truth. Those men were guided by the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ's truth to the world. You know, there is much being said in the name of religion today, but most of it does not agree with what the Bible says. As a result, we must weed through a lot of men's babble and nonsense to get to the truth of God's Word. Just remember this, my friend: MUCH of what you hear today is NOT true, because it is not taught in the Bible. It may come from a very intelligent man or a man who has the gift of words or eloquent speech and may appear learned, but it's not true because it is not taught in God's Word. What is true is precious and you should latch on to it and cling to it. **I John 4:1 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."** **I Thessalonians 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."** That word "*prove*" is telling us to *put it to the test* of God's Word, and if it lines up with what the Bible says, then Paul says we are to grip it tightly. In other words, we are to consider it a precious thing and not turn loose of it. We are to put it in safe keeping in our hearts and to practice in our lives. So, the truth is valuable because of its rarity. All truth is found in God and has been fully revealed in His word.

Then, Solomon says, in his proverb that once we have the truth, it is far too precious to sell. In fact, he just plainly says *sell it not*. He doesn't say we should sell it for a high price, but under no circumstances should we relinquish it. Do you know why collectors of fine things often comb rummage sales and estate sales and flea markets and junk stores? I like to go to places like that because I never know what I might find. Those places are such a draw because many people throw things away without realizing their value. Then you might end up being the fortunate one who stumbles upon that item and is able to purchase it at a good price. That happens a lot. Something gets sold at a yard sale for a few dollars or even a few cents that would've brought a much higher price had it been offered on the internet or at an auction, to people who appreciate it or know its value. People unwittingly lose a great fortune because they don't know the worth of what they have.

There are multitudes of people who have been that way with the truth. They don't esteem it very highly and it doesn't take very much to get them to sell out, even though Solomon says that we shouldn't sell it at ANY price. Think about it: many people will sell the truth for any number of reasons. Some will sell it

for popularity or acceptance. It's not hard to stand for something if others don't oppose it. But it's a different matter, you see, to stand by yourself and uphold the truth. That takes some courage. Only the person who understands the value of the truth will be willing to do that. Daniel understood how valuable the truth was when he refused to violate the law of God to appease the king by eating from his table and drinking his wine (**Daniel 1**). You see, truth meant more to Daniel than even the acceptance of the royal government. He wasn't going to sell the truth out for prestige and acceptance with the king. I can tell you that it's far from popular today to stand for what the Bible teaches about much of anything! If you stand for what the Bible says about morality in this day and time, you will immediately be labeled a hateful bigot or a Bible thumper. If you contend for what the Bible says about doctrine, you just wait. There is a multitude of people lined up to call you a legalist or a fundamentalist. And some people can't stand up under that kind of criticism, so they sell the truth. Whatever pleases the most people, whatever is the course of least resistance, that's what they believe, that's where they go to church, that's how they worship, and so on.

And then, there are those who sell the truth for comfort or convenience. That is, they'll only stay with what is right as long as it comes easy and doesn't demand too much of them. But should the truth to encroach upon their worldly lifestyle or their busy schedule, they'll sell it. They treat the truth as though it's not worth very much. They'll trade it for something much less requiring. That reminds us of the story of God's people after the division of the kingdom long ago. You'll recall that Jeroboam was worried that the people would go back to Jerusalem to worship, and their hearts would thus be turned away from him, until they would rebel against him and kill him. He was so worried about that that he set up two idolatrous altars in the more nearby places of Bethel and Dan, and this is what he told the people: **I Kings 12:28-29 "...It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan."** Jeroboam told them to worship the substitutes that he had set up nearby. He sold his error to the people by convincing them that it would be easier and more convenient. Speaking of going to a place to gather with others for worship, I know of people even now, in this dispensation of time, who will drive a long distance to meet with a group of people who worship according to the Bible because there's not a congregation like that in their community. And instead of just throwing up their hands, they go to great effort and great expense to make that trip Sunday after Sunday to join with people of like precious faith to worship according to the teaching of the Bible. You know, that sometimes leaves their neighbors, co-workers, family, and friends scratching their heads and wondering why the church right down on the corner isn't good enough. It's because they value the truth, and they're not willing to sell it for comfort or convenience. So, what does the Bible say happened when the people took the deal that Jeroboam offered them, and worshipped the idols in Dan and Bethel? **I Kings 12:30 "And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan."** **I Kings 13:3 "...This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out."** God condemned Jeroboam's false altars. Well, a lot of people are lured away from Jerusalem as it were, by the appeal of an easier religion. They sell the truth for convenience and for comfort.

Then there are those who sell the truth for what they think is progress. Many are casting the truth aside because it's not considered up to date. It's not in step with the culture. It's not cool and trendy and fashionable. Many churches of Christ are selling the truth to be like the popular church in town. To be like the denominations or the emergent church. **Jeremiah 6:16 "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..."** There is something to be said for what is tried and true, and that is the case with what has been established by precept or example in the Word of God. I believe the worship as it was offered by the early church is still our pattern and should be good enough for us today. Many of the

modern innovations in doctrine and worship that so many people take for granted today may draw a crowd and appease most cutting-edge thrill seekers in religion today, but they don't please the Lord because they are a departure from what His word teaches. The so-called 'Christian community' is constantly evolving so quickly, in fact, that it is hard for anyone else to keep up. It's like trying to keep up with the latest technology: you go and spend a lot of money on a new device and it's not very long until it's old hat. That's the way it is with change in religion. The latest, greatest, most cutting-edge thing, in just a few years, is going to be old hat. When you become un-tethered from the Word of God as your guide and as your standard, where will you end up? *"Buy the truth, and sell it not..."*

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