

What About Truth?

Pr.16:6 says, *“by mercy and truth iniquity is purged”*. Such is the Biblical principle that God Almighty has decreed to be His divine manner in providing saving atonement for the multitude of perversities of His elect. In these two words, *“mercy and truth”*, is found the very fountain head of all that has been promised and provided by God concerning His great plan of redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And, eternity is stamped all over these two terms. For over and over the scripture says that God’s mercy endures forever -- and, as far as His truth is concerned -- the truth about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit -- it couldn’t be truth without being as eternal as He is! For Christ is truly the only one through whom we may receive from Triune God eternal purging -- eternal forgiving and cleansing -- from all of our unrighteousness. This, indeed, makes the contrast between Moses and our Lord -- the same as between time and eternity: **Jn.1:17** > *“For the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”*

There is, however, among the Christian community much stress that is continually put upon the *mercy* of God in the atoning salvation of a soul. But I would like to draw your attention to the equal place of importance that God’s Word puts upon His *truth* -- and its significance in real regeneration. For none can deny that without God’s everlasting mercy there certainly is no hope of being saved -- but I fear that all too often there is a foreboding tendency among ourselves to place the footing of the eternal salvation of souls upon God’s mercy, alone, and therefore, at the expense of knowing, believing and understanding His saving truth.

In **Jn.14:6** our Lord Jesus declares Himself to be the only Way to the merciful Father, but is He the Way to eternal Life without also being the Truth? Of course not! *“He is the Way, the Truth and the Life”*: and no man comes unto the Father -- but by Him being all three of these descriptions of sovereign grace.

Now the debate of this matter invariably gravitates into the argument of just how much truth, then, must be known and believed and understood by a man before he is to be considered saved? The answer to this question -- the settling of this sort of dispute however -- where man is concerned -- is one of total and complete vanity -- from its very outset! For the truth that accompanies genuine scripturally defined and

described regeneration is not truth that can naturally be attained by any man -- any more -- or any different -- than the mercy of God that is necessary in order for one to be eternally saved can be humanly earned.

God is merciful, as He wills, upon those that He has intended to save -- and He will, consequently, most certainly bring them all unto a saving knowledge of His truth. 1Tim.2:2-3 says: *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior -- who will have all men to be saved -- and come unto the knowledge of the truth.”*

But, it is from here, that it seems to me, within the spectrum of men arguing over -- how much truth does a sinner need to be educated with in order for him to be regenerated -- that the truth of the gospel of the glory of Christ is reduced to a bare minimum of what is said to be “the basic facts” concerning Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. These “basic facts” are generally a man-made statement about Christ as Savior that is grossly devoid of sound Biblical doctrine. This is done in the name of not limiting what God can do as far as His saving a soul is concerned.

Plus, this makes it simple and logical for man to conclude that many around him -- already are at present truly alive in Christ -- but they are just not at present in agreement with certain scriptural tenets of the faith. God will overlook these in His mercy. Making these differences of no consequence.

This sort of practice tends to minimize the eternal danger that the scriptures, themselves, place on disagreement with -- and misunderstanding of -- sound Biblical salvation doctrine. 2Th.2:10-12 says of *“...them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.”* That *“...for this cause -- God shall send them strong delusion -- that they might believe a lie -- that they all might be damned --who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

1Tim.6:3-5 issues us a solemn warning: *“If any man teach otherwise -- and consent not to wholesome words -- even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ -- and to the doctrine which is according to Godliness -- he is proud, knowing nothing-and destitute of the truth...from such withdraw thyself.”* Right from the start of Christ’s own ministry -- it was the truth of God’s

saving way that absolutely infuriated the world around Him. Lk.4:16-30 tells of the very first recorded sermon that He preached -- in His own home town. He, it says being filled and led of the Holy Spirit:

“...came to Nazareth where He had been brought up. And, as His custom was -- He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day -- and He stood up for to read. (17) And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book -- He found the place where it was written:

(18) ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted -- to preach deliverance to the captives -- and recovering of sight to the blind -- to set at liberty them that are bruised -- (19) to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.’ (20) And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister -- and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. (21) And He began to say unto them, ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.’

(22) And all bare Him witness -- and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’”

This then is the first indication that this whole congregation had missed the point. Christ inasmuch as indicated to them that He, Himself, was the eternal Son of God -- the fulfillment of Is.61 -- and they were about to demonstrate their hatred of that truth. But let’s read on:

(23) “And He said unto them, ‘Ye will surely say unto me this proverb: Physician -- heal thyself! Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.’ (24) And He said, ‘Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. (25) But I tell of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months -- when great famine was throughout all the land -- (26) but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Zarephath, a city of Zidon -- unto a woman that was a widow. (27) And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet -- and none of them was cleansed -- save Naaman the Syrian.”

Now this was Bible truth that He had expounded unto them. It was there in the written word of God -- plainly declared! But, do you think

that it mattered to them -- that this truth was clearly stated in the word?
No -- it did not!

(28) “And all they in the synagogue when they heard these things -- were filled with wrath (29) and rose up -- and thrust Him out of the city -- and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might cast Him down headlong! (30) But He passing through the midst of them went His way.”

So we see demonstrated from the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus, Himself, that in order for the truth to be received -- it must be mercifully revealed to you as truth...eternal truth...that cannot be denied! This is brought out in the very next two verses. Guess where He went? Guess what happened next?

(31) “And came down to Capernaum -- a city of Galilee -- and taught them on the Sabbath days. (32) And they were astonished at His doctrine -- for His word was with power.”

There is power in word of truth! Power to transform and to save! But, the word of truth concerning Christ has no power without the mercy of God being present. It must precede the presentation of the truth...or, the truth will not be received. Let's view a demonstration of this from the next congregation that Jesus confronts in Capernaum. This is found in Vs.33-37 of Lk.4:

(33) And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil -- and cried out with a loud voice -- (34) saying, ‘Let us alone! What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee -- who thou art -- the Holy One of God!’ (35) And Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Hold thy peace and come out of him!’ And when the devil had thrown him in the midst -- he came out of him -- and hurt him not. (36) And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, ‘What a word is this! For with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits -- and they come out!’”

Here in this synagogue -- this congregation -- there was a man -- perhaps a member -- that was demon possessed! I don't know if any of his friends even knew this. But, the very presence and teaching of Christ -- mercy and truth -- caused this purging -- this cleansing -- to take

place. And, Jesus is made known to be the Son of God incarnate.

And, vs.37 says of Him: *“And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about.”*

And, He demonstrated that He, indeed, is a fulfillment of Is.61! For it goes on to say from vs.40-41:

(40) “Now when the sun was setting all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him -- and He laid hands on every one of them -- and healed them. (41) And devils also came out of many -- crying out and saying, ‘Thou art Christ the Son of God!’ And He rebuking them suffered them not to speak -- for they knew that He was Christ.”

So we see that some will truly receive the word of truth concerning who Jesus is -- but some will not. And, Jesus seems to be very particular -- how it is that the truth is to be received. Let’s face it. The devils gave forth a perfectly accurate description of Him as being the Holy One of God and as being the Christ -- the Son of God -- but He was in no wise impressed with their accuracy. He continually rebuked them -- and silenced them. It is by the mercy of God and His word of truth that the revelation of who He is will be made -- and iniquity will be purged.

And in that light -- the Holy Spirit inspired apostle Paul says from Phil.3:15-16> *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect [or, lit., complete. Something that only the Holy Spirit can do for you]-- be thus minded. And if in anything ye be otherwise minded [or, lit., differently minded] -- God shall reveal even this unto you. (16) Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained [or, lit., already arrived at] let us walk by the same rule -- let us mind the same thing.” [or, lit., Let us think the same way]*

All too often, however, when man reduces the gospel of God down to a few terse facts about Christ as being the Savior of the world -- he declares as scriptural doctrines that which is nothing more than the precepts and commandments of men. From Mt.15:7-9 Jesus says this about the religious Pharisees:

“Ye hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying: ‘This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth -- and honoreth me with their lips -- but their heart is far from me. In vain they do worship me -- teaching for

doctrines -- the commandments of men.”

The context of this passage becomes reality when men begin to mess with the doctrinal content and definition of the gospel -- and thereby turn it into something less than what it really is. When man dogmatically declares with his lips that, “God can do anything He wants to -- He can use anyone He wants to -- in order to effect the salvation of sinners” -- it sounds as if he honors Him and defends him. But, when he ignorantly says this in effrontery to what God, Himself, declares and reveals from His own word as to the way He has decreed -- that which He does do His saving work among men -- then there is no honor to God in this statement at all!

When we briefly examine Ez.36, do we not see the sovereignty of God’s power performed in a particular way -- in His effecting the eternal salvation of His people? How He reaches down into the very inner-recesses of sinful man -- and takes out of him that stubborn and rebellious heart and spirit -- and then replaces them with a new heart that hears and sees the truth -- and a new Spirit -- that is, in fact, His own Holy Spirit -- that obeys His word -- and desires to live and glorify Him. He truly can do anything -- if He can do this!

But, we also see that -- in keeping with this great sovereign act of His mercy -- this truth -- which He also declares from Ez.36:37> “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.”

Don’t you see that there would be no reason for us to hope and joy in our Lord Jesus if God did not include our prayers as a part of His means in performing His mercy and truth upon us? By seeing this in His word we have, as a result, a steadfast anchor of assurance -- divinely imparted to us whereby we may be confident that He has saved and regenerated us.

Of course its true that there would not be put forth the prayer for mercy -- if there were no life present to cause it to surface. Corpses do not truly pray...they just exude death!

In like fashion, however, the saving faith generated prayer for mercy -- does not truly come forth apart from the Holy Spirit imparted revelation and understanding of the saving truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth that is brought to light from scripturally sound

doctrine.

To minimize the gospel into a general and -- for the most part -- ambiguous statement about the saving work of Christ is to put forth a gospel that breeds false conceptions and self delusions. This happens because so called gospel preaching occurs, once again, at the expense of a genuine spiritual understanding. Spiritual understanding like that of the apostle Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. He prayed: "...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ -- the Father of glory -- may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. (18) The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. That ye may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Eph.1:17-18

This sort of spiritual understanding can only come by the Holy Spirit -- "...with whom there is no variableness -- neither shadow of turning!" Jas.1:17

And, well does the next verse aptly state: (18) "Of His own will begat he us with the word of truth..." Oh praise God for His "mercy and truth"!

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Now before we end -- I want to remind you of a solemn warning in regards these important things.

Our Lord Jesus, Himself, taught in Mt.7:15-20> "Beware of false prophets -- which come to you in sheep's clothing -- but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (16) Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns -- or figs of thistles? (17) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit -- but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. (18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit -- neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (19) Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. (20) Wherefore by their fruits -- ye shall know them."

In this section of scripture we are warned of false prophets. A prophet, for the most part, is one who declares, "Thus saith the Lord". Now, for our day and time -- with the completed and authenticated sacred scriptures of God's word -- the only way anyone can dogmatically declare -- "Thus saith the Lord" -- is in conjunction with Bible

preaching and teaching. So, therefore, a false prophet would be anyone who declares that the Bible teaches something as true -- that is not the truth. Or, quite simply, anyone who teaches false doctrine is a false prophet (or a false teacher). Oh how dangerous a false teacher is!

Is.9:15-16 says: *“The ancient and honorable, He is the head -- and the prophet that teaches lies -- he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err -- and they that are led of them are destroyed.”* [or, lit., swallowed up -- swallowed up with error]

Now, Jesus says that we can know who these false prophets are *“by their fruits”*. Therefore, it would be wise for us to learn just exactly what is meant by *“fruits”*? Does *“fruits”* pertain to what is spoken?

Well, from the succeeding context of this passage in Matthew it would certainly appear that what is said is definitely a part of the *“fruits”* of a man. For Mt.7:21 takes us right into the final judgment -- where we hear the cry of false ministers! Jesus says, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord -- shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven.”*

Then in Luke’s parallel rendering of this passage it becomes even more obvious that what is said is a part of the fruits of a man: Lk.6:43-45> *“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit -- neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (44) For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs -- nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. (45) A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good -- and a evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil. For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”*

Mt.12:37 -- Jesus says quite pointedly: *“For by thy words thou shalt be justified -- and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”*

And then there is that which is written in Jn.8:47 what Jesus also said: *“He that is of God -- heareth God’s words. Ye therefore hear them not -- because ye are not of God.”*

Gospel truth is as particular a message as the atonement of Christ which it proclaims!

Isaiah’s commission to bear forth the message that God had for the

people of his generation -- was a particular message -- that was to be delivered in a particular way. And, of the ministers of his day he wrote: Is.8:20> “...If they speak not according to this word -- it is because there is no light in them.”

The second epistle of John alludes to what he repeatedly referred to as “the doctrine of Christ”. Of this doctrine he wrote: 2Jn.9-11> “*Whosoever transgresseth -- and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ -- hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ -- he hath both the Father and the Son. (10) If there come any unto you -- and bring not this doctrine -- receive him not into your house -- neither bid him God-speed -- (11) for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*”

This may seem a bit harsh and inhospitable, but we are not talking about some triviality that should be lightly esteemed. We are talking about God’s truth that our Lord Jesus, Himself, identifies with. He says that He is the truth.

Under the Old Testament -- false teaching was capital offense: Deut.13:1-5 plainly says: “*If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder -- (2) and the sign or the wonder come to pass -- whereof he spake unto thee -- saying, ‘Let us go after other gods -- which thou hast not known -- and let us serve them.’ (3) Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God proveth you -- to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (4) Ye shall walk after the Lord your God -- and fear Him -- and keep His commandments -- and obey His voice -- and ye shall serve Him -- and cleave to Him. (5) And that prophet or that dreamer of dreams -- shall be put to death -- because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God -- which brought you out of the land of Egypt -- and redeemed you out of the house of bondage -- to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.*”

Calvin said of all that is meant by the “*fruits*” of men -- the manner of teaching holds the first place!

One other point, in this regard -- before I close for now. The text says, “Beware” -- which word means literally: hold your minds away from. To

subject oneself to the teaching of false doctrine can and will influence you to miss-judgment and compromise where the truth is concerned. Jesus says, "Beware of false prophets" -- Or, "Hold your minds away from false prophets!"

Our own fruitfulness for the Kingdom of Christ depends on it. Do you see where it asks: "*Do men gather grapes of thorns -- or figs of thistles?*" Correlate this question of Christ's with what He taught in the parable of the Sower as related to us from Mk.4:7> "*And some fell among thorns -- and the thorns grew up -- and choked it -- and it yielded no fruit.*" Where truth is not taught and believed and understood -- good fruit is not found.

Gospel truth knows no sort of compromise with God. It makes no difference if a person has lived as a Christian for years and years -- where there is corrupt fruit coming forth from their message -- I fear there may yet be lacking the right way of life in their standing before God.

I have experienced both reactions in evangelism. Where on the one hand, when to a professing believer there is delivered the definitive scriptural presentation of God's work of sovereign grace through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ -- that they become totally rebellious to the Biblical fiber and fabric of the truth -- and walk away in utter defiant disbelief. And then on the other hand -- I have seen in other professors the light of understanding and joy just overwhelm them as they hear the gospel message, it seems, for the first time with real clarity. These respond with an eagerness and an assurance that they know this is the truth -- and they love it! At last they truly see! Questions are answered and clouds of obscurity are dissipated into nothingness as the light of the truth comes mercifully shining through.

Oh, dear ones, do you not see that the apostle Paul suffered so under the awesome prospects that many of his friends and family of Israel might possibly be doomed to be eternally dead wrong in their miss assessment of the person and work of Christ. Why else would he, himself, become eternally cursed -- if in so doing it would secure their salvation? (Rom.9:3) But, no such thing could possibly be. For nothing can thwart, or alter, the plan of God. Even though Paul's brethren, for the most part, rejected him and the message of the gospel he was sent to proclaim. He

yet boldly stood firm for the truth declaring, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes...”*.

Even so, dear friends, let us be of the same mind to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I leave with you Ps.25:10-11> *“All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. (11) For thy Name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity -- for it is great.”*

Amen