

GOD!
Message 23
Scripture: John 8:28-36

INTRO: This is our final message on the attributes of the God of the Bible. We are dealing with the matter of truth. One of the attributes of God is truth and He is the only true God. We said in the last message that truth is that which conforms to reality. We saw that in the world there is a lot of confusion about truth. Pilate expressed that when he asked Jesus, "What is truth." Here we have an influential political leader and he did not know what truth is.

John MacArthur is right in the title of his book, "The Truth War". We are in a war on this matter of truth. Martin Luther, that courageous reformer, was aware that in every age the devil is fighting some specific area. And Luther said something like this, "If we are not willing to deal with those issues the devil is working on at that particular point, we are not preaching the Gospel at all."

In the first message on God's attribute of truth, we simply sought to define truth. To the world, truth is a philosophical concept. To the Bible believer it is the presentation of that which conforms to reality. We begin this morning with Jesus' statement that He is the truth.

b. Jesus as the truth cont'd

In John 14:6 we have three major propositions made by Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life." What does Jesus mean when He says, "I am the truth"? I gave you a definition of truth in the last message and said that truth is that which conforms to reality. How does that fit in with Jesus being the truth?

Well, let me show you what some Christians have done to get around the fact that truth is propositional. In his book, 'The Truth War', John MacArthur says of this passage, "Even professing Christians nowadays argue along these lines: 'If truth is personal, it cannot possibly be propositional. If truth is embodied in the person of Christ, then

the form of a proposition can't possibly express authentic truth. That is why most of Scripture is told to us in narrative form - as a story - not as a set of propositions" (14).

So, our question is, when Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by Me", what did He mean by the statement that He is the truth? Well, note that He says first, "I am the way." Clearly, the phrase, 'the way' is meant spiritually. He is the spiritual way. When He said He is the life, the word *zoe* is used, not *bios*, and clearly refers to spiritual life. This is the word used in the phrase 'eternal life'. Physical life is expressed by the word 'bios' from which we get our word 'biology'. At the close of the verse He concludes like this, "...no man come to the Father but by Me." So, it all has to do with how we come to the Father, and this expresses spiritual truth, not the revelation of truth that comes to us through the five senses or what we call general revelation.

So, we argue, if that holds true for the phrase, 'the way' and the phrase, 'the life', it also holds true for the expression that He is the truth. No doubt what is in view is spiritual truth. He is the source of the truth by which we get back to the Father, He is the source of the life we need to get back to the Father. He is the only One by whom we come to the Father. So, He concludes these three great propositions by saying that no man comes to the Father but by Himself.

If we seek truth in the physical realm, we gain it through the senses, through general revelation. When we seek truth in the spiritual realm, we gain it through Jesus Christ in special revelation, the Word of God. He is the truth. This truth comes to us

in words and propositions. Maybe that is why John calls Him 'the Word'.

c. All truth is God's truth

I also want to give us some instruction on the use of the statement, "All truth is God's truth". Today, even among Christians, are those who are impressed with the counselors who come out of our secular institutions. When someone is emotionally very low or they are troubled by various things, or there has been suicide in the family, Christians feel they need to go for 'professional' counseling. These are people trained in psychology or psychiatry. Many Christians accept those fields as legitimate fields of study that prepare even the unsaved to guide people in the spiritual realm.

Now it is important to know that all English words with 'psych' in them, such as psychology and psychiatry come from the Greek word psychee, meaning soul. Psychology and psychiatry deal with things that belong to the soul. Amazingly, the unbeliever usually does not even believe in the soul or if he does, it is in a new age sense, and yet he dabbles in pshchology. And I ask, to whom does dealing with the soul belong? Well, listen to 1 Peter 2:25, "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." Who is that? Jesus Christ! And who looks after souls in His behalf? Listen to Hebrews 13:17, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." And who is that? Pastors!

And how did the secular psychology of Freud and Jung, and Maslow and Rogers, enter Bible schools and the church? Here is one of the arguments used to achieve that, "All truth

is God's truth." So if Sigmund Freud discovered 'truth' in the realm of psychology, though he was an unbeliever, all truth is God's truth so he simply discovered some of God's truth and the Christian should not refrain from using God's truth! After all, truths such as $2+2=4$ are not taught in the Bible but, as Christians we use them all the time. So why not use Freud when he discovers truth?

What is wrong with that bit of logic? Well, first of all, in psychology and psychiatry we are not dealing with scientific truth, or truth in the physical realm. We are dealing with the soul, the realm that belongs to Jesus Christ and Christians. Second, you have to prove it is truth. If one studies the rate of success with secular psychology, your chances of being helped by going to a counselor are about as great as not going to one! Just read their own statistics!

When I was credit curriculum developer for correspondence courses at a Bible school I asked if they wished that the psychology courses be made available by correspondence. The reply was, "Oh no. Our courses are quite out of date!" But they were only a few years old! Out of date? Truth goes out of date?

A tract put out by the Berean Call says this, "Yet psychology is as unstable as water. Its false gospel continually changes as its conflicting theories ebb and flow and its gurus come and go." Then they say, "Leading secular psychologists and psychiatrists are debunking their own profession in books and articles with such titles as, *The Myth of Mental Illness; The Myth of Neurosis; Psychotherapy: The Dangerous Cure; The Death of Psychiatry; Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession.*"

Should we conclude that psychological truth has been hidden from man until such secular and ungodly people as Sigmund Freud came

along and taught us? Did the Church need to wait 2000 years for Freud and Maslow to learn truth in the spiritual realm? Remember, psychology and psychiatry have to do with the soul, and Jesus Christ is the Shepherd and overseer of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25) and pastors have the care of souls (Heb. 13:17).

Listen now very carefully to 2 Peter 1:2-4, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust."

Does the Bible contain all that we need for life and godliness? Or do we need secular psychology to come along and help us out with some truth not contained in the Bible? We conclude that the Bible has all we need for life and godliness, and we conclude that our place of counseling is the Word of God by those who know how to use it.

d. The future and truth

Let me deal briefly with the future and truth. For this we go to 2 Thessalonians 2. This chapter has much to say about the end-time antichrist. It also speaks about the day of Christ. I believe the day of Christ refers to the time Christ spends with the Church in heaven during the time the tribulation happens on earth. I do not have time in this message to give evidence for that here but I may do so in the very near future. But some teachers had come to Thessalonica and had told them that the day of Christ had already come (v. read 2:1-2). Now the perfect tense in the original

indicates here, I think, that this day has come and is now in progress. So, anyone who found himself on earth at this time had missed out on the rapture. That is why these people were instructed in verse 2 to not be soon shaken in mind. The words, 'soon shaken' tell us that these were seriously shaken up, so much so as to cause panic.

Now let me give you basically the sum of what Paul teaches in this passage. First, when Jesus returns for His Church He will take all the Christians to heaven. Then the antichrist will be revealed and all those who heard the message of the Gospel but did not receive it will go into the tribulation and they will be sent strong delusion so that they will believe the antichrist's lie.

And then Paul explains why they must enter the tribulation (read 9-10). It is because they did not receive the love of the truth. In other words they did not want the truth and therefore will go into the tribulation. And those people who had the opportunity to believe before the rapture but did not receive the love of the truth will be sent strong delusion by God in the tribulation so that they will believe THE lie, in order that they may be condemned, who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But then notice in verse 10 why believers are raptured and saved from the tribulation (read 13-14). In the context the salvation spoken of is that salvation from the tribulation (see 1 Thess. 1:10). And why was the believer saved from the tribulation and the antichrist? Because of their sanctification by the Holy Spirit and their belief in the TRUTH. The unbeliever enters the tribulation and is sent strong delusion because of his failure to receive the love of the truth! Believers are delivered from it because they loved and obeyed the truth!

Listen to what John MacArthur says postmodernism's goal is, "Therefore postmodernism's one goal and singular activity is the systematic deconstruction of every other truth claim. The chief tools being employed to accomplish this are relativism, subjectivism, the denial of every dogma, the dissection and annihilation of every clear definition, the relentless questioning of every axiom, the undue exaltation of mystery and paradox, the deliberate exaggeration of every ambiguity, and above all the cultivation of uncertainty about everything" (11-12). Then he says, "If you were to challenge me to boil down postmodern thought into its pure essence and identify the gist of it in one single, simple, central characteristic, I would say it is the rejection of every expression of certainty" (12).

Some time ago my wife shared Isaiah 59:14-15 with me. These are incredible verses (read). These verses are written in a time when Israel is in a very low spiritual condition (read 1-5). When truth falls in the street, and corruption is everywhere, there is no fear of sin and of God. When truth falls, as it is today, we are in danger. So verse 15 says, "So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey." When truth fails, and anybody takes a stand for truth, he immediately sets himself up as a prey. When truth falls, nobody is safe. Those who commit sin are in danger and those who seek to live right become a prey to those who hate truth! So it is today.

There is to be a Christian conference in Littleton, Colorado and one of the topics of that conference is, "The Coming Persecution of Christians in America." So there are those in Evangelicalism that see persecution coming to America in days ahead. This is not surprising in light of what Isaiah has said here.

e. The need to stand for truth

I want to remind us of another important matter regarding truth. In this day of 'tolerance' we have a very hard time digging up the courage to stand up and speak for the truth. For the sake of peace we will tolerate and let many things go unchecked, even though we disagree. MacArthur writes in his book 'The Truth War', "We also happen to be living in a generation when many so called Christians have no taste for conflict and contention. Multitudes of biblically and doctrinally malnourished Christians have come to think of controversy as something that should always be avoided, whatever the cost. Sadly, that is what many weak pastors have modeled for them" (pg. xxiii).

I once taught and believed that church splits should not occur other than for serious theological reasons. With the things we have recently experienced, I have had to rethink that. Today there are many churches with fine doctrinal statements but they are far in left field in practice. When a church has a fine doctrinal statement but there is corruption in practice, it is time to take a stand.

So MacArthur goes on like this: "Controversy and conflict in the church are never to be relished or engaged in without sufficient cause. But in every generation, the battle for the truth has proved ultimately unavoidable, because the enemies of truth are relentless. Truth is always under assault. And it is actually a sin not to fight when vital truths are under attack. That is true even though fighting sometimes results in conflict within the visible community of professing Christians."

Later he says, "The truth war is after all, war. Warfare is always serious, but this is the battle of the ages for the highest of prizes, and therefore it requires of us the

utmost diligence" (pg. xviii). He then repeats one of General Tecumseh Sherman's most oft repeated sayings, "War is hell." We have had war in our church family. That has created war in families, and that creates in us a deep aversion for war. We want war no more. We dislike it so much that we are sometimes willing to compromise truth for the sake of peace but we must not do it! Nor must we get so tired of such difficulties that we come to the place we are willing to relinquish truth or integrity, or that which is right.

I know some things are not worth fighting over, so may God give us the wisdom to know which is which. But any true Christian must be in the battle, and not get weary in it. Get weary in battle, and in the end we may lose out. When we become too afraid to enter battle, we may well lose out altogether.

In 1 Tim. 3:15 we are told that the Church is the pillar and ground of truth. That of course is spiritual truth. And if we, the Church, are afraid to stand for the truth, what is the hope of the world? What is the hope of the Church?

f. The power of truth

For our last brief point, let me remind us of the tremendous power of truth in the mind. Jesus said in John 8:32, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." In John 3:21 He said that anyone who does the truth, comes to the light. Here is the ultimate question: Am I willing for the truth no matter what it may cost?

Second, truth can infuse into those who have it such a strength that no amount of persecution can drive him or her from it. It is so powerful that physically weak young women have become so strong that tormentors could torment them from morning till evening

and they stood firm. Truth will take you through absolutely anything.

CONCL: So, we conclude this series of messages on God, with the attribute of truth. When it comes to our quest for truth in the spiritual realm, the God of the Bible is the only true God, and He is the God of truth. He will never lie to us. We can count on Him. When He says that if we confess our sins He will forgive us, you can count on it. When He says He will save us if we believe in Jesus Christ, we can count on Him. When He tells us what will happen in the future, we can count on that happening. God is the God of truth!

And, maybe in conclusion, it is good for us to be reminded that as God is a God of truth and that anything that is not in line with the will and character of God is sin. If God were to measure my life in light of truth, that which conforms to reality, on a scale of 1-10, where would I be? What if He checked me out on my words? What if He checked me out on my work? May we be ever more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

And since we have concentrated so heavily on truth, let me say one thing in conclusion that we need to remember. That little epistle written by the Apostle John we call 2 John spells out very carefully that truth and love, two great attributes of God, need to always be kept in careful balance. Never let truth override love, but on the other hand, do not let love override the truth. These two must be kept in careful balance.

God! There is the biggest thought your mind will ever dwell on. And if you do not know Him, and seek Him with all your heart, you will find Him! And He will save you and help you fulfill that for which He made you! And Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, when he had tried everything, came to this conclusion: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."