

Sold Out to Truth

by Barbara Buzzard

“A wise person is hungry for truth, while the fool feeds on trash” (Prov. 15:14).

It seems that truth is in short supply in our world. Let’s consider what is popularly believed about truth. We speak of the unmitigated truth, the unvarnished truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We say that truth is stranger than fiction.

Some also say that “your truth is as good as my truth,” indicating that it is impossible to have objective truth. This mindset would prevent one from searching for truth, and also the *responsibility* to search for truth. It would *alienate* a person from the very high praise given in Scripture to a truth-seeking individual. Science has taught us that all truth is relative. The Scriptures say the opposite. What if God speaks of *absolute* truth? A worldview without objective *absolute* truth is, I think, an incoherent one.

Let the Scriptures Speak

“Truth stands the best of time; lies are soon exposed” (Prov. 12:19).

“Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth” (John 17:17). This is a fascinating Scripture but **not** a common perception of how one becomes pure and holy.

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

“This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). And since *we* are the church that is a challenging job description!

“Get the truth and don’t ever sell it” (Pro. 23:23a).

So we are to have truth as our top priority and to freely bless others with it. It would mean: 1) that we *recognize* truth (and this would necessitate recognizing lies that masquerade as truth); 2) that we *engage* in truth and *pursue* it; 3) that we *internalize* it; 4) that we *honor* it (perhaps by a passionate desire to give it away!); 5) that we are willing to publicly (ouch!) own it and bear witness to it.

And yet...

We are strangely *estranged* from truth. How odd it is that a baby, almost as soon as he is born, has as his greatest desire to find out all there is to learn about the world. That desire soon becomes jaded as we learn to accept the status quo. There is always a price for challenging conventional wisdom. We soon learn to

keep our heads down and go with the flow. We learn to deny the appeal of truth. We easily lose the ethic that says if you care for truth you must follow it, wherever it leads. It is true that truth **can be** terrifying if it butts up against established traditions. Nowhere is this more true than in religion.

One would think that a Lutheran might be curious as to who Luther was and what he believed. Not so, in my experience. Those who heartily espouse Calvinism more than likely have never heard of Michael Servetus, one of several whom Calvin had *murdered*. Baptists do not know that there were Baptists who believed in conditional immortality, and that there were unitarian Baptists! Jehovah’s Witnesses do not know that their founder Russell did not believe that Jesus was an angel! Seventh Day Adventists generally do not know that their founder, Ellen White, said that only Satan would be left on the earth during the millennium!

Church of Christ members who are strongly amillennial in the U.S. are generally not aware that their brothers and sisters in Australia are firm believers in the coming Kingdom! And on and on it goes. What place does truth hold for them? One *should* wonder why there is such precious little interest in or emphasis upon looking at church history. Have you ever heard of a church which advises members to look into their history? In England we would say, “Funny, that” — which is to say that it is as obvious as the nose on your face that they **cannot** do this. If one knew a little church history, it would give the game away. One only has to read, for example, *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years* by Philip Jenkins (review at 21stcr.org).

A Riddle and a Parable

What can give of itself and not be diminished? The answer is truth (and love, of course). As I perceive it, truth always comes with a responsibility — that of blessing others with it. This is exactly as you would with other great news, of prizes won, windfalls, inheritances, etc. Truth as portrayed in the Parable of the Sower needs an incubation period. Before an idea can “take root” there is a gestation period. When you plant a seed of truth, you never know when it will sprout and emerge. *But it is your job to do the work* — to plant the seed and to stay patient, watering and tending as needed. Consider 1 Timothy 4:10 and honestly evaluate yourself: “We work hard and suffer much in order that people will believe the truth.”

The Power of Truth

“He will use every kind of wicked deception to fool those who *are on their way to destruction because they refused* to believe the truth that would save them” (2 Thess. 2:10). Absolutely amazing statement. If one eliminates all words except the subject and verb, one is left with: *Truth saves*. Again, this is not the popular thinking on the matter, but it certainly reveals the startling emphasis Scripture puts on truth. And Titus 3:11 echoes this emphasis: “For people like that have turned away from the truth. They are sinning, and they condemn themselves.”

The Battle for Truth

And so if we are to be successful in the battle for truth, we must have a warrior-like mentality, i.e. truth warriors. We must foster, feed and satisfy a hunger for truth. Truth is in crisis with the collective psyche believing in relativism. But the battle will be won by the vigilant. And we must fight on two fronts: in our culture where tolerance and acceptance have come to rule the day and in the religious world where manmade creeds rule. And it is even harder now as we face alternate facts and fake news in a culture where we have seen the collapse of standards of fairness and balance. The assault on free speech is new to our society, but *the assault on independent thought is not*.

Any who have dared to challenge orthodoxy know what it feels like to have one’s cherished beliefs derisively dismissed, one’s strongest beliefs ridiculed and challenged. It is as if there exist “thought police.”

Perhaps this insight will be comforting:

“All truth passes through three stages:

First, it is ridiculed.

Second, it is violently opposed.

Third, it is accepted as being self-evident” (Arthur Schopenhauer).

And this too is an interesting insight: to those who hate truth, truth sounds like hate.

It is a despicable plan of Satan to diminish the truth about God and His Plan for humanity, about the Messiah and his purpose, about the Gospel of the Kingdom, about immortality. But he has mastered the deception. Only he could warp such straightforward and life-saving teaching. Not to see that there is an agenda at work to dissuade you from asking questions, to prejudice you against “overthinking,” to quiet an investigative spirit, to steer you away from questioning the received package of creeds, is frightfully naïve.

You Have to *Join* the Side You Are On!

Truth, in all aspects, is rapidly becoming a despised entity. The strongest of warnings is given in Romans 1:18 about wicked people *suppressing* the truth. And so we deduce that since it is wicked to suppress the truth, it is *good* to reveal it. It is not so much a case of unspeakable truth as *unspoken* truth.

I have heard it said that finding truth is an *event*. If, in God’s providence, you have “stumbled” upon it — give it your all. Give it pride of place. After all, it is the New Covenant way of being right with God!

Truth must be deployed. Then it becomes the *engine of motivation*, the power plant and giver of energy. Ideally we should be deployed by the church to fight the giant. (This is not happening.) And yet Scripture promises us strength and courage to do this. Paul’s prayer in 2 Thessalonians 1:11 is heartening and encouraging and challenging: “And so we keep on praying for you, that our God will make you worthy of the life to which he called you. And we pray that God, by his power, will fulfill your every desire for goodness and every work of faith.” ✧