

9. Words of Truth (1Q 2015—Proverbs)

Biblical material: Proverbs 22, Proverbs 23, Exod. 22:21–27, Proverbs 24, Eph. 5:20, Ezek. 33:8.

Quotes

- Anyone who doesn't take truth seriously in small matters cannot be trusted in large ones either. *Albert Einstein*
- In an age of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act. *George Orwell*
- If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth, only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair. *C. S. Lewis*
- Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened. *Winston Churchill*
- The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it. *Flannery O'Connor*
- The truth that makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear. *Herbert Agar*

Questions

What should we be looking for in these Proverbs? What are the principles behind the statements? Are we following truth wherever it leads, or do we stop when it becomes uncomfortable? Why is the truth so important—what's wrong with some self-deception? Why is God so committed to truth at all costs?

Bible summary

The focus in this study is on words of truth. The writer of Proverbs states his objective: “teaching you to be honest and to speak the truth, so that you bring back truthful reports to those you serve.” (Prov. 22:21 NIV). Other great lines are “Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness.” Prov. 23:4 NIV. “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.” Prov. 23:17 NIV. “There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.” Prov. 23:18 NIV. “Do not gloat when your enemy falls.” Prov. 24:17 NIV. Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked.” Prov. 24:19, 20 NIV. Exod. 22:21–27 gives clear instructions not to oppress the needy or to charge interest on loans, and to be compassionate. Eph. 5:20 FBV tells us: “Always thank God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are to be responsible for others (Ezek. 33:8).

Comment

As we look at these “words of truth” we need to look behind the immediate and prosaic aspect. What are significant are the principles being promoted. For example Prov. 23:31, 32 NIV: “Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.” A pastor friend of mine was giving Bible studies to an interested couple. One evening when he visited he noticed a bottle of wine on the dining table. He showed them this verse as a

way of discouraging them from drinking alcohol. Next week when he visited he saw a wine bottle on the table once more. "I thought I pointed out the dangers of drinking wine," he observed. "I read that verse from Proverbs that says not to gaze at wine when it is red and how it bites like a snake." "Oh," they replied, "It's OK, pastor. That's white wine." The truth is that alcohol can cause much damage!

The most convincing proof of truth is not logical argument, emotional appeal or desperate demand; but demonstration. What is true is most clearly seen in action--in the way what is good and right deal with each changing situation. In that sense, seeing is believing. Not theoretical knowledge, but practical application. That's why God says "Taste and see that the Lord is good." We are to examine how this truth operates in reality. Experiment with God, and with what he says, with what he is.

Why did Jesus come? So we could see and know and understand the truth. For all the lies had blinded us to God, so that we couldn't see. Because of the way we are, we prefer the lies, and believe in them. Isn't it true that "A lie travels round the world while truth is putting its boots on"? But as Friend and Father, God couldn't leave it like that. For our sakes he had to make sure we understood the difference, that we didn't confuse truth and lie, so we could make a real choice.

"What is truth?" asks Meister Eckhart, and then goes on to answer: "Truth is something so noble that if God should turn aside from it, I could keep to the truth and let God go." We are to study truth for ourselves, examine the evidence, and come to a logical conclusion. It is not enough to accept the verdict of others, however believable. Nor is it acceptable simply to take the opinions of those in authority, however esteemed. We are called on to investigate truth for ourselves, to analyze and experiment, to make deductions and test the conclusions against what we observe, both theoretically and practically in our own lives. We are to accept nothing uncritically, and God invites us to examine his words and his actions to see whether they do indeed make sense, that they are true and trustworthy.

Ellen White Comments

When truth becomes an abiding principle in the life, the soul is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." This new birth is the result of receiving Christ as the word of God. Then by the Holy Spirit divine truths are impressed upon the heart, new conceptions are awakened, and the energies hitherto dormant are aroused to cooperate with God. . . . Christ was the revealer of truth to the world. By Him the incorruptible seed--the Word of God--was sown in the hearts of men. {FLB 19}

It is the desire and plan of Satan to bring in among us those who will go to great extremes—people of narrow minds, who are critical and sharp, and very tenacious in holding their own conceptions of what the truth means. They will be exacting, and will seek to enforce rigorous duties, and go to great lengths in matters of minor importance, while they neglect the weightier matters of the law—judgment and mercy and the love of God. Through the work of a few of this class of persons, the whole body of Sabbathkeepers will be designated as bigoted . . . and fanatical. . . . {Mar 147}

No misfortune is so great as to become the worshiper of a false god. No man is in such miserable darkness as he who has lost his way to heaven. It seems that an infatuation is upon him, for he has a false god. {TM 435}

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