

TRUTH AND ITS IMPORTANCE.

WHEN Jesus stood before Pilate, accused as a malefactor, he vindicated his character by these simple words: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." John 18:37. Pilate, unconscious of the fact that Jesus had already given the substance of the best definition of truth, asked, "What is truth?" and immediately went out. His question, and the fact that he did not seem to expect an answer, would indicate that he did not believe in the existence of such a thing as truth.

There have always been, and are still, many, many people in the same condition as Pilate. There are many who affect to disbelieve in the existence of truth and goodness. The reason for this is plain. Their own hearts are corrupt, and they have naturally sought the association of those of like character, until they know nothing of truth. The licentious man, who has always associated with men and women of low and depraved tastes, does not believe that there is such a thing as virtue. The knave thinks all men can be bought, providing the price is fixed high enough. Pharaoh, who knew nothing by experience of real worship directed to a God who could discern the motives, did not believe that there existed any such being. Only the man whose heart is pure, or who has longings for purity of soul, can know and appreciate the truth; for it is only the man who will do God's will who shall know of the doctrine. John 7:17.

When Jesus said that he came into the world to bear witness of the truth, and that everyone that is of the truth would hear his voice, he expressed in another form what he had already told his disciples: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6. He is the one that is holy and true, "the faithful and true witness." **One of the definitions of truth is, "Exact accordance with that which is, or has been, or shall be." This exactly agrees with what is revealed of Jesus. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," Jehovah, "the one which is, and which was, and which is to come."**

In his prayer for the disciples Jesus told what truth is, and what it will do. Said he: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." John 17:17. But Jesus is the Word of God, the one through whom alone the character, and attributes, and power of God are made known to men. The law of God, the ten commandments, is declared to be the truth, as the psalmist says: "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth;" and, "Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth." Ps. 119:142, 151. These commandments were spoken by the voice of God upon Mount Sinai, and "he added no more," so that they are, in an eminent degree, the truthful word of which Christ spoke in his prayer, yet it was the voice of the Son of God, the divine Word, who uttered them, so that **the commandments of God are inseparably connected with our Lord Jesus Christ. They proceeded from him, being an expression of his own righteousness.**

That this is so is shown still farther by the words of the prophet concerning Christ: "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable." Isa. 42:21. There cannot be the slightest doubt that this chapter is a prophecy of the Messiah, and **the law is expressly declared to be his righteousness.** So when the prophet David spoke by

inspiration in Christ's stead, he said: "I delight to do thy will, O my God yea, thy law is within my heart." Now take these facts, together with Christ's words, "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice," and we have the most positive evidence that the keeping of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are inseparably connected. No one can keep the commandments without faith in Jesus, and **no one ever has real faith in Jesus except as he is driven to it by the terms of the violated law, and by a sincere desire to have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him.** The righteousness which is "through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9), is the only righteousness that will secure one a dwelling-place in the new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell.

The importance of this truth is shown by what it will do for us. Christ showed in his prayer that it will sanctify us. The apostle Peter writes: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," etc. 1 Peter 1:22. And Christ, who declared himself to be the embodiment of the truth, said to the Jews who believed in him: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31, 32. But the same apostle who wrote, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," also said of the believing Gentiles: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, *purifying their hearts by faith.*" Acts 15:8, 9.

From these texts which we have just grouped together, we learn that **the law of God is the truth that makes men free, and purifies the heart,** but that it is not the law in the abstract that does this, but "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and that this is effected by "the Spirit of truth." The law of God is called a "law of liberty;" and so it is, but only to those who obey it; and none can obey it except as they yield to the striving of the Holy Spirit, and come to Christ.

The truth which makes free is not an outward compliance with the ten commandments. The Pharisees outwardly appeared righteous unto men, yet they were in the worst kind of bondage. David says: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." Ps. 51:6. And speaking of the man who shall abide in the holy hill of the Lord, who shall be "delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God," he says that it is the one that "walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." Ps. 15:2. **The man who does that is one with Christ, even as he was one with the Father, because Christ had the law in his heart.**

The keeping of the commandments of truth is all that God requires of man. Says Solomon: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Eccl. 12:13, 14. **There can be nothing more required of man than to do this; but it cannot be done except by faith in Christ.** This does not mean a passive assent to the principles of the Christian religion, **but such faith as brings Christ to dwell in the heart, so that he can work in us that which is good.**

The comprehensiveness of the law of truth is shown by the text last quoted. It is the whole duty of man, and by it every work, with every secret thing, shall be brought into judgment. This shows that the commandments of God are that word of God which is "quick, and powerful, and

sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12. **Keeping the commandments is something more than a form. It consists in having every act, every word, and every thought just such as they would be if Jesus were dwelling within the man, acting and speaking and thinking through him.** It consists in acting and speaking in every instance just as Jesus would act or speak under the same circumstances. **Surely this cannot be done unless Christ dwells in the heart.**

Who, then, has outgrown the ten commandments? Are they of a lower grade of morality than is required of Christians in this age? Nay, verily. Let no one say that to exalt the law of God is to deny Christ; for in no other way can we so exalt Christ, and so appreciate the necessity of having his continual presence with us, as by exalting the breadth and holiness of the law.

But will there ever be any people on the earth who will have attained to that perfection of character? Indeed there will be. Says the prophet: "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth." Zeph. 3:13. When the Lord comes there will be a company who will be found "complete in him," having not their own righteousness, but that perfect righteousness of God, which comes by faith of Jesus Christ. **To perfect this work in the hearts of individuals, and to prepare such a company, is the work of the Third Angel's Message. That message, therefore, is not a mass of dry theories, but is a living, practical reality.**

Happy will those persons be who form the remnant of Israel, in whose hearts the righteousness of God's law of truth is perfected. For them mansions will be prepared in that glorious city wherein there shall in nowise enter anything that defileth, "neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Rev. 21:27. And as they approach that great and strong city, the walls and bulwarks of which are everlasting salvation, the cry will be raised, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth, may enter in" (Isa. 26:1, 2); and as the everlasting doors are lifted up, they will enter, with the King of glory at their head, and shall henceforth have a right to the tree of life, and dwell in his presence forever.

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Signs of the Times, Vol. 14, No. 50, (December 28, 1888), p. 790.