

March 10, 2023

Dear Members and Friends,

Today we live in a world that is subject to constant change. What was considered normal twenty years ago is very different from what is considered normal today. And the media is one very powerful method used to accept these changes as a normal part of life.

Here in Australia, we have just experienced the WorldPride event being held in Sydney, including the Mardi Gras parade. They have been constantly on the news bulletins with many interviews of the participants being shown during prime TV viewing time. The object of the WorldPride event was for it to be thought of as an alternative but fully acceptable way of life. In fact, those who do not accept it are vigorously criticized.

The question for Christians is, how do we know what is right and what is true, and also importantly, what does God think of the goings-on we see all around us?

Looking at what is true, Truth is a subject that is mentioned over four hundred and fifty times in the Bible, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, and its importance is revealed to us.

When Moses was up on the mountain for the second time, the LORD proclaimed His name and this name included "abounding in goodness and truth" (see Exodus 34:6). So God abounds in Truth; it is a part of His character.

There are so many statements referring Truth to God; especially in the Psalms. "All His work is done in truth" (see Psalm 33:4). His Truth is so great, we read, "For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, And Your truth unto the clouds" (see Psalm 57:10) Also, "His truth endures to all generations" (see Psalms 100:5). Psalm 119:142 reveals that God's Law is Truth, and Psalm 119:151 states that "...all Your commandments are truth."

One of the statements made by Jesus Christ about Truth is in John 14:6 in response to a question by Thomas. "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" We see that Jesus said "the truth", not just truth. This is stated in all versions including the original Greek, showing us that Jesus defines what is Truth. He is the Truth and all that He does and says is Truth.

Getting back to the introduction, how do we know whether the changes in modern society are right or wrong? How do we know what God thinks of them? To know this, we need to compare them with the works of God which are done in Truth; the Law of God which is Truth; and the Commandments of God which are also Truth.

But we need to have more than just knowledge of the Truth; we must have a love for it, to hold onto it and never let it go. There is a warning in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 about just knowing the Truth, but not loving it. "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason," not having the love of the Truth, "God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie." In this case, love is translated from the Greek word *agape* which is the love that God gives us through His Holy Spirit (see Romans 5:5).

This shows us how important it is to love the Truth so that when deception comes as it certainly will and is even currently present, whether moral as in the world, or religious deception, we will compare that deception with the Truth of God and be able to reject that deception. With only a knowledge of the Truth but not the love of it, it is easy to let go of it and go along with the world or the coming false religious leader and perish as a consequence.

When something is loved, it is held onto strongly. The more we love Truth, the more strongly we will hold onto it.

Interestingly, the very first item of the armor of God needed to fight against Satan and his demons is the girdle of Truth (see Ephesians 6:14). Not only that, but the apostle Paul instructed the Philippians to meditate on certain positive things, the first of these being whatever things are true (see Philippians 4:8).

Even the first warning Jesus gave on the Mount of Olives was not to be deceived especially by false christis and false prophets. In other words, hold onto the Truth so we recognize what things are deceptive and reject them.

We can also read what gave the last surviving apostle, John, his greatest joy. 3 John 4 states: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." His children were those he had taught God's Way first-hand or through the ministry that he had raised.

While attending a previous congregation, many people outwardly had the Truth. They kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days, they abstained from unclean meats and they fully appeared to be a part of the congregation. They may have done this for decades. But when false teachings were introduced, many eagerly accepted those wrong teachings and straight away, went out to eat unclean meats, and stopped tithing, etc. They did not love the Truth and ultimately fell away from the Church.

Christ gave an admonition to His disciples in John 8:32: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." That is, free from deception and ultimately free from the second death and to be in God's Kingdom forever; provided, we love and live by the Truth—God's Truth.

Remember what Christ said in His prayer in John 17:17: "Sanctify them by Your truth, Your Word is truth." God's Word, the Bible, is where we find the Truth so we can avoid the deception this world and Satan use to tempt and destroy us.

With much love and concern,

Your brother in Christ's Service,



Paul Niehoff (Australia)