

WHAT IS TRUTH

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Afternoon

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What is truth? Pilate asked this question when our Lord Jesus, whilst being tried by him, said, ‘To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bare witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice’. (John 18 verse 37)

Pilate was faced with what is faced in courts right through the world, they are trying to determine the truth, there are two opposing parties before them, each has promised to tell the truth, each gives a version of the truth, trials can go on for months, the jury then has got to decide who really is telling the truth, what is the truth. And Pilate was faced with this. The Jews, our Lord’s own people were saying one thing, the witnesses they brought couldn’t even agree one to another, it is no wonder that he said, ‘What is truth?’, is it what you are saying? Is it what the Jews, the priests, the scribes, the lawyers are saying? Is it what these false witnesses are saying?

And you know, you might feel this. Through life you see many different conflicting opinions and ways, and especially in the things of God. Yes you have all sorts of religions, Mormon, Sikh, Jehovah’s Witness, all sorts, some are based on the word of God, some are not, even those that are based on the word of God many of them they can’t agree one to another, they each have a different message and your question might be, ‘What is truth?’ No wonder Pilate was confused, but we might be as well.

Sometimes we’ve had those that have received our free Bibles and they’ve come out of the Mormons; one particular one from the Jehovah’s Witnesses, we have correspondence with him. I said to him, be very very careful that you don’t end up escaping one error, one cult and then fall into another error, you need to go where the truth is really preached, where it is faithfully preached.

But you imagine someone who is first trying to find faith, trying to find the truth, the way, where do they turn to? And so it is a really valid question, and we may ask is there such a thing as ‘objective truth’? Truth that corresponds to reality, truth that exists independent of the mind.

Once Christians if they were to talk to someone who was an unbeliever, could come straight to arguing and to bringing the truths of the Bible to that person, but now more and more the first thing that is needed, is to actually show that the Bible is the truth, or what is the way of truth. We live in a society now that many people have no concept of God or the word of God or foundation truths. Years ago, many heard them, many were brought up with them, it is not the same today at all. And so this question is very valid, ‘What is truth?’

If we were to open our Oxford English Dictionary and read the definition, it gives this, ‘the quality or state of being true, also the truth, that which is true opposed to false, fact or belief that is accepted as true’. What kind of truth is that? Accepted by who as truth? In 1987 there was a philosopher Alan Bloom and he wrote a book called ‘The closing of the American mind’, but he began the book with a statement, he said, ‘There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of. Almost every student entering the university believes or says he believes that truth is relative’. So they are already coming to their further study with this thought that it is only relative, it is not absolute. The sad thing is, when they finish university

they are still or even more believing that that is the case. So then even reality is subjective. That something is actually depending on the mind, and this is the case today. My daughter has just had to fill out a form for HR at the local hospital and she was asked what her birth gender was and what gender she wished to be identified with, something which years ago we never were questioned like that on one of those forms. So truth is subjective to the feeling of the person. And very often in that case it completely defies science as well. But this is the common view of truth that most people have. You know, even people that believe that truth is subjective, if they were walking across the road and they saw a car coming racing towards them they wouldn't say, I don't believe that car is coming towards me like that, they would jump out the way, suddenly they believe in absolute truth. So it is selective in what they really accept and what is not.

How then can we define absolute truth?

If we said the truth is that which corresponds to reality. But even that needs qualifying.

There was a lecturer once and the story goes that he was on the stage, he was giving his lecture and someone came up from the audience flying their arms around and ran off the stage, and the lecturer took the opportunity and went down to the audience, he picked out five of them and said, 'what actually happened?' And all five of them said this man ran on the stage and hit the lecturer, the lecturer said, 'I wasn't hit, he never hit me', but from their viewpoint he did. And there was no point of forgetfulness, it had just happened, so from their viewpoint that reality, it wasn't right, what they saw didn't correspond to reality.

So, we need to add a qualifier, and we need to say that; **The truth is that which corresponds to reality as it is perceived by God, as God sees it, not as we see it.**

And of course, there will be times, we see things and we accept them as truth, because from our point of view we see it as true, but especially when we're thinking of the things of salvation, when we're thinking of from eternity to eternity, and when we're thinking of this as God as Creator, God has created all things.

I thought of this in thinking of this word, 'What is truth?', What is time? One day time shall be no more. What about other things? What is music? You can read music, you can sing music, you can hear music, you can play music, but what is music? Who made all these things that make up our lives? And you see, God has created all these things and He has made them, and the truth is determined by God, His counsels of old.

So, let's think of that again, **absolute truth is that which corresponds to reality as it is perceived by God.**

Now one thing that is noteworthy, when God gave to Solomon wisdom, then the very first thing that was brought before Solomon was a trial, was a test for him to find out the truth. It was the two harlots, each of them had a child, they are in the same household together, one child died in the night, they wake up one is alive and one is dead, they come before

Solomon and one says, ‘the living child is mine’ but the other says ‘the living child is mine’. One has an explanation for it, and she says the other woman overlaid her child and it died, and she took her dead child and swapped and they’re both saying and testifying that the living is theirs. How is Solomon going to know the truth? We know of course there must be an absolute truth. Both women couldn’t have born that one child, there were two children there. And the Lord gave Solomon that wisdom to know what to do so the truth was known. God knew the truth, and He gave Solomon wisdom to do and to say just the right things to determine what that truth was. And of course, he played on the fact that a mother will do anything to protect her child, so when he in a very vivid way calls for a sword and makes out that he is going to divide the living child and both will have a part, then the mother whose child it was she immediately rises up, ‘let the other have the child, don’t slay it’, and the other one couldn’t care less, and immediately Solomon knew what the truth was. And so, we have an illustration of the wisdom from God in something that men will say there is an absolute truth, but that truth was discerned by the wisdom God gave to Solomon.

Well, let us hear what God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ defines truth as.

God telling us where His perception of truth is to be found.

Firstly, in John 17 verse 17, this is the beautiful prayer of our Lord in intercession for His people, He prays ‘*Sanctify them through thy truth*’, and very clearly he states, ‘**thy word is truth**’. There is the very clear definition for us what is truth. Thy word, the word of God, the holy Bible is the truth, hold on to that, whatever men might say to take it from you, to bring out many arguments to undermine it, we consider a bit later what men might use, but hold fast, this is what the Lord Himself has said is truth. ‘*Thy word is truth*’, God’s word is truth.

Secondly it is Christ as God, the personification of truth, He embodies truth, and so we have in John 14 v 6, ‘**Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me**’. And then we have in Ephesians 4 verses 20-21, ‘*But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus*’: and really if you take away the ‘as’ in that last part, you have a very clear statement, ‘**the truth is in Jesus**’.

So there is the second one, first there is the word of God and secondly we have our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who is the truth.

Then there is the third definition, we have in 1 John 5 v 6, ‘*This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because **the Spirit is truth***’. So, we can say: Thy Word - the Father. I am the way – the Son. The Spirit is truth – the Holy Spirit. That is, the Trinity is the truth. And of course, the Holy Spirit is the Author of the Word of God.

So, truth as perceived by God is revealed in the word of God, the Holy Bible, is in the Person of Jesus Christ, and is witnessed by the Holy Spirit of truth.

But how do we know the Bible is true? You can hear those at your school or workplace and as soon as you go on this track, they ask you, ‘how do you know?’. What answer would you give an atheist or someone who held a different holy book? I wonder how many of you have actually been asked that. Do you want to put up your hand if you’ve been asked, ‘how do you know that the Bible is true’? Yes, a few.

As soon as you start to quote the Bible or to speak anything of authority from the Bible, they will want to know, how do you know that? Now an answer that many might give, and it is a subjective answer and it will be a wrong answer that you should never give, ‘I was brought up to believe it is true, my parents believe it and so does my church’. It’s subjective. The Mormon might say that too, and the Muslim might say that as well, it doesn’t really prove anything, does it. Another wrong answer is, ‘I’ve been blessed through it and I have prayed and seen answers to my prayers, it gives me direction for life, it has worked well for me’. But again, those answers, they are all subjective. A Mormon could do the same, a Muslim could do the same, of their holy book. But you might say, ‘I have answers to prayer, and surely doesn’t one of our hymns says that ‘Jesus is God I can avouch, for I have prayed to Him as such, and He has heard my prayers’. But again, it is subjective on my feelings.

If we look at Deuteronomy 13 verses 1 – 4, this is the Lord saying to Israel, *‘If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder (now listen to this), And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (and note this in verse 4) ‘Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him’.* The teaching is, the children of Israel and you and I are to follow the word of God, not any impressions or signs or wonders that others give that point you away from the word of God and away from the true and living God.

Now there is a danger, even among our own churches, you can have a church meeting and someone will come, ‘the Lord has spoken to me, He has given me a word, we are to do this...’, and all the rest of the church members, they are all silent, there is no prayer, there is no searching of the scriptures because we can’t deny this man says the Lord has spoken to him and we must believe it, without even trying it with the word of God, without even testing it. It’s subjective, as it were. The Lord may have spoken to him, the Lord may have given him a word, but if He has, I believe it will be ratified by that church and the word of God will approve it as well, and it will truly be a seal of the Lord.

Now the passage here in Deuteronomy shows something subjective, some feelings that led away from the word of God. No feelings that any Christian or church member has, if they will turn away that person or others from the word of God or teach contrary to it, are not

right, they are not the truth. The truth is absolute, and the truth is in the word of God. We are not to define the word of God by our experience. But I'm going to come back to that later on, because we must experience the truth. ***The truth is not the truth because we experience it, but that we know that we are of God because we experience the truth.***

So what is the right answer? How do we know? Some of you may have seen these, and I have got a number of these leaflets we have on our website. They are what we give with our Bibles as an introduction to the Holy Bible in which I give the reason why (this is to those who have never had a Bible, and those that have them), why we can trust the Holy Bible as being the only word of God to mankind, unique among books and of supreme authority. I'll read the seven points we put there:

- 1) It is a reliable collection of historical records – Peter says in his epistle, 'we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'. The word of God has real nations, real names, real people, right from Genesis you can trace through to the flood in going from one person to the next when their firstborn was born and work out the age of the earth to the flood. You have chapters, and you may have thought why God has put these in His word (and especially if you read consecutively, privately or as a family), and you say, I've got a chapter and it's all names all the time, the tribes of Israel. Why? Because God is saying again and again, this is 'not cunningly devised fables', this is a historical record, these things really happened, the earth really was created by God, Abraham really was called out of Ur of the Chaldees; Jacob was brought into Egypt; Israel was formed in Egypt and brought out of Egypt; and Israel today. I wonder how many of you realise that just before your lifetime and mine, Israel was brought back to its own land, so that we can say there is a nation of Israel and they are in that same land which the Lord gave them and yet for nearly 2000 years they weren't there, they were scattered everywhere. Something in current history that has been brought to pass, brought back to their own land after being scattered. So, it is important to realise this, and really in the ministry, whenever we are looking at the word of God, it's good to begin with the historical first and then come to a spiritual teaching or application of it, because we have those things that speak of real people. I always like the book of Romans, the first part of Romans is very doctrinal, but the last chapter, suddenly there are a lot of people and salutations and speaking to this one and that. It is a historical provable record, someone hasn't just sat down and decided what they are going to do. God's word from creation to providence, through the history of Israel through which our Lord Jesus Christ came is a record that is unique to the Holy Bible, the word of God.
- 2) These documents they were written by eyewitnesses and during the lifetime of other witnesses. Witnesses that could question those things that were written. When Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 and he says of the Lord Jesus dying and rising again and appearing to men and then ascending into heaven, and he names the disciples He appeared to, and 500 brethren at once, some of whom who have fallen asleep, and

others, they could have challenged anything the apostle said. We spoke of the witnesses, the one coming on stage getting it all wrong. Remember with the witnesses of the word of God, the word of God is inspired and though it comes from what they saw, the very words that they wrote are the words that God gave them to write.

- 3) It also records supernatural events that were fulfilled in specific ways, those specific prophecies – you think of King David (1000 years before Christ), you read Psalm 22, Psalm 69, the very words of our Lord upon the cross, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’, speaking of the vinegar, no bones broken, the pierced side. This was all foretold 1000 years before, and when our Lord comes and He is offered up on Calvary again and again it is written, ‘that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets’, or that ‘the scriptures might be fulfilled’. And that is very important to note, in the word of God, God telling beforehand, because He has planned it, everything that happens is according to His plan and His counsel, and that is in the word of God.
- 4) The fourth thing is this, that the authors actually claim that the text is of divine and not human origin.
- 5) The fifth thing is, that no man can claim to have a higher authority than God, and God tells us that the Bible is His word. Don’t ever get caught into this trap of someone trying to get you to prove the Bible by something outside of the Bible, because immediately you are saying, something else is above the word of God. But you can tell them, what I’m bringing before you, *is the supreme authority*, there is no authority above that, all below is sinners and men and created things and wisdom of men, this is the highest authority, and though men won’t receive it or believe it, it is the truth and we hold fast to that. As soon as we start saying, well we’ve got to ask this professor and that professor, are they going to put God on His judgment throne and judge whether what He is saying is right or really is truth or not?
- 6) The sixth thing is, the majesty and consistency that is throughout it, even though it was written over a space of some 1600 years, a complete flowing together, one book, one message, no contradiction, all God’s words are right.
- 7) And the last thing it explains not only the amazing world we live in, but a reason for the presence of death and suffering.

Those things define why we hold the Bible as unique among books and it is not, as it were, subjective, it is actually proven things that we are bringing before you. It is interesting to note the phrase, ‘saith the Lord’, appears more than 500 times in the Bible. What does the Bible say of itself in 2 Timothy 3 verses 16-17, ‘*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*’.

Then what does Paul tell the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 13, he says, *'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us (that's the apostle preaching to them, bringing the Old Testament and setting forth the gospel in the New in the light of the Old as well), ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe'*.

The word of God testifies what it is, we have in 2 Peter 1 verses 20-21, *'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost'*. That is, we are not to think, well I'm going to interpret this how I want it to be to my life, and you can interpret it your way. But we should be asking, what is God saying to us in this passage? What is His message? What would we think, if we had written something down, and one person decides to take things out of the context of what we had said, and suited it to their agenda, and someone else takes it and they suit it to their agenda? You say, that's not what I wrote at all, that wasn't my message at all, but men will do that to the word of God. But the word of God itself says that the word is not of private interpretation.

Now of course, for the people of God, the knowledge and belief that the word of God is the word of God is a matter of faith. We think of Hebrews 11 verse 3, *'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.'* It doesn't say that we understand by the word of God, yes, we do from Genesis, but we need faith, and that faith is the gift of God, it's one of those things (I don't want to speak irreverently) the 'chicken and the egg' type of thing. The word of God says, *'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'*. But then you have a people, *'but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.'* You say, well, what comes first? Hearing the word or faith, profiting from the word. They both come at once. When the Lord gives faith, *'by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God'*: Immediately that word will be profiting that person, immediately their faith will come from that word.

But does the truth still apply today? 2000 years after Christ?

You hear people say, it is outdated, this is the 21st century. Outside of the door of the chapel at Cranbrook where I am pastor, and on the homepage of our website, we have the words of Psalm 100 verses 4-5, *'Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations'*. It's good for us to remember that, **'all generations'**, and His mercy is everlasting. So, men do not only question the existence of objective truth, but that this applies to us today. How we need to be reminded of that in Psalm 119 verse 160, *'Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever'*. The eternal word.

But what about Bible versions?

You heard this this morning, this really is a subject all on its own, I can't cover it. All I would say is, that Satan's temptation was, '*Hath God said?*' The translations into languages is God's will and purpose, and we can expect to see clearly in providence His word being translated into our own tongue and in the tongues of other nations in the world. However, the printing in English of so many different translations of the word of God, (as it was originally given, kept pure in God's providence in Hebrew and Greek) that has brought that original temptation again, to undermine the faith of God's people. I don't suppose there is another language in the world that has so many different translations and used in local congregations so differently. And so, one says, '*Hath God said?*' is it your version or the version I use, or this or that? We don't all know Hebrew and Greek, and if we did it would only be a smattering, we look back in providence, and I hope you in your lives look back in providence to see the Lord's hand (we heard some of that this morning) of His dealings with you, and things that have been brought to pass, and we must see that in the translation of the Word of God. We have seen it in the King James Authorised Version which I believe is the most accurate version and I stick to that, and especially as I have so much committed to memory. It is so sad when a young person has maybe many years of learning the scriptures, then they change to another version, and all that memory is gone, and they haven't got that recall of the scriptures again. So that is another subject for another time.

But what about Bible interpretation?

Another subject for another time, a large subject, how do we interpret the word of God. All I would say is, I just put three basic points here.

Firstly, come to the word of God with prayer and reverence and a teachable spirit, and ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth. 'When He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth'. Ask Him.

Secondly, be ready to hear what God is saying, not looking for something to strengthen our own perceived ideas. How easy it is to say, 'we're Gospel Standard Baptists, and every text that we look at has got to reinforce the articles, and all that we believe and all that we do'. You know, if you come to the word of God, and you come with own pre-conceived ideas, you've immediately got a barrier to what is the truth. And you know, discovering the truth will be hurtful and painful experience, when the facts or realities turn out to be different from that which is expected. I'm not saying that the articles of our churches are different from the word of God, but we start with the word of God not what we might think it should be saying.

Thirdly, compare scripture with scripture to get the true sense. I always think of our Lord's temptations in the wilderness with Satan on this, in Matthew 4 verses 1-11, I'll just summarise what is said here, when Satan first comes with his temptation, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*. Our Lord answered and said, '*It is written*'. Immediately points him to the word of God. So the devil then in his next temptation, he uses the word of God. He takes him up into the holy city and sets him on the

pinnacle of the temple and saith unto him, *'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone'*. And the Lord's answer was, *'It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'*. So the Lord compared scripture with scripture and discovered Satan's deceptiveness in twisting the word of God.

Now that's all I'm going to say on Bible interpretation, it's a very large subject, there are many books written on it, but those three things I think will be a good guide to us.

What does the Holy Bible say about truth?

I've just brought some Bible texts together.

We can walk in the truth. John says in his 3rd epistle chapter 1 verse 4, *'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth'*. Not in something undefinable, but in absolute truth, walking in the word of God.

We can love in truth. 1 John 3 verse 18, *'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth'*. Not deceiving one another, but actually love in reality, but love in the bonds of the truth as well.

How are we to know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error? I often find that is a very good test of something, try the spirits, what is the spirit of it? Again 1 John 4 verses 5-6, *'They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error'*. If you are speaking the word of God and there are those that do not hear it, and will not hear it, that is how you know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

The way of truth can be chosen. in Psalm 119 verse 30, *'I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me'*. What a blessed thing to be those who choose the way of truth.

We can love a person in the truth. *'the elder unto the well-beloved Gaius whom I love in the truth'*, (3 John 1 verse 1) similar to what we had before.

Solemnly there is a word of truth which God can take from us. In Psalm 119 verse 43, the Psalmist loving the truth is evidenced from not wanting it taken from him, *'and take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments'*.

We must worship God in Spirit and in Truth. Remember when the Lord had the woman at the well of Samaria come unto Him, and He spoke to her about true worship and he says, *'God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth'*. (John 4 verse 24) Yes, how we worship is not subjective, not, 'oh I get nice feelings doing that, and I think this might be good, people like it anyway', the word of God shows us the main elements of true worship in truth, in spirit, singing with the heart and the understanding also.

Praying with all prayer for all saints, making supplication, the reading of the word, the preaching of the word of God. God is worshipped in the way that He determines. That's one of the things of our day, well we can worship God in any way that we like. Things like, how many hymns we have, or what order we have, that is not prescribed at all, but the essential aspects of worship are. It's a sad thing if there is a lack of prayer, lack of reading the word, and the sermon consists of ten minutes of public affairs and having a go at the last government's laws that were made.

God cannot lie. What a statement is that! Paul, when he writes to Titus, he says, *'in hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, promised before the world began'*; And then something to bear in mind; the world cannot receive the spirit of truth. In John 14 verses 15-21, I'll read just from verse 17, *'Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you'*. Don't be surprised when you're speaking to those in the workplace, in the world, and they do not receive the Spirit of truth, they won't, and the Lord says why.

Our Lord tells where we can come to wrong conclusions. In Mark 12 verses 23-24, our Lord has had those come to Him that think they can prove there is no resurrection, and they have one of their families that married a wife and then he died. According to the law his brother took her to wife and all seven brethren had her to wife, they thought they had tripped him up, whose wife was she going to be in the resurrection, because all seven of these brethren had had her for a wife, *'In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife.'* And Jesus answering said unto them, *"Do ye not therefore err (why did they err?) because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?"* the word of God, the Holy Spirit, they didn't know those two things, that's why they made the error, that's why they didn't know the truth.

A beautiful word I've often loved in John 8 verses 31-32, Our Lord had a word to them that believed on Him, He said to those Jews which believed on Him, *'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; (interesting in this morning's address, the definition of a Christian, well here is really the same definition – a disciple, a follower of Christ, or here, continuing in my word), and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'*. What a key! What is truth? That's our question this afternoon. Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, by continuing in the word of the Lord.

Now although the truth is not determined by our experience, yet those that are saved experience the truth in their souls.

This is why we, especially in our denomination but in other reformed churches as well, preach experiential truth, it is experiencing the truth in one's own soul. We're not deciding what is the truth but we are proving it is right because we walk it out. The truth is not through man's wisdom but by preaching.

There's a very telling passage in 1 Corinthians 1 verse 21, *'For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe'*. What God is saying, is that though he has given to man wisdom to send men to the moon, to do computers and all sorts of things, wonderful wisdom. As regards the soul, that is regarding knowing God Himself, as it is regarding believing savingly, having saving faith, God has hidden that from man, they cannot know it at all. The way He says they shall know it, is through the foolishness of preaching, that's how God reveals it, a way that the world says - that's foolishness, they mock at it, but it's God's way.

In Mark 4 verses 11-12, our Lord says unto his disciples - and this is his explanation of preaching in parables, *'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them'*. Truths set before them, they go right over their head, they cannot discern them, it is vital that we be given faith, given that spirit of truth and know that truth in our own soul, experience that truth that the world at large without the spirit do not experience of the truth of God. The apostle Paul experienced conviction of sin, we read, *'I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death'*. (Romans 7 verse 9)

I'll give you something to think about, when you hear the word preached from now on, you think how many times the minister may be speaking of a person experiencing the truth.

You think of the Beatitudes, *'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled'*. (Matthew 5 verse 6) He may describe a poor soul that feels so unholy, so unclean, they want to do good but only evil is present with them, they cannot think right thoughts or do right ways, it grieves them, they're troubled with their own heart, I would be holy, I would be righteous but I'm all unrighteous, I'm all unclean. And there the Lord is pronouncing blessing on those that hunger and thirst, you say, that's me, I'm experiencing that truth of what our Lord has said.

'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked': (Jeremiah 17 verse 9) And a child of God says, I know that, how oft does my heart deceive me, I've experienced that truth.

When it comes to the blessing of the word, and the beauties of Christ, the loveliness of Christ, that setting free through the truth, to actually know that, that joy, that liberty, that love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. We're not having to experience it to say, yes I know the word of God is true, but the experiencing of it proves that the Lord has shown us the truth, and we're walking in that truth. When we preach experience we're not preaching something outside of the word of God, we're preaching what the people are walking in the word of God.

In the beautiful passage of Deuteronomy 8 verses 2-3 we have our Lord telling the children of Israel the reason why He brought them through the wilderness, and the reason was, *'Thou*

shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no'. And what was the end of it? 'that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.' So all that they went through in that wilderness journey was to reinforce this, they were feeding upon the word of God, the truth, that was what they had to learn, and to know and to trust in, not men but God's truth. Those who are kept by the power of God through faith, Peter says, of the trial of your faith. Where the Lord works in His people that true faith He will try that, He will test it. You know, if I had a ring, a real gold ring, and then I went to a toy shop and I got a nice shiny ring they would look very similar, and you were going to pay several hundred pounds for a ring, how are you sure you didn't end up with a toy, a plastic one? You would want to test it. How are you going to test it? I'll start a fire, the plastic one would burn up the gold won't. Another way – those of you who do science here, you could work out the volume of the gold in the ring, and you could weigh the ring and weigh the other one. One litre of water weighs a kilogram, one litre of lead weighs about 11 kilograms, one litre of gold weighs about 19 kilograms. There! you didn't think gold weighs heavier than lead, did you (it's nearly twice the weight of lead)? You couldn't imitate pure gold, very few substances that are heavier than gold. But you try it, you test it, is it real? So the word of God is also to be tested and tried.

So if the truth is perceived by God then we should ask the Lord concerning our own state before Him, not trust ourselves.

David says in Psalm 139 verse 23-24, *'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting'*. He has recourse unto God. Thou knowest the truth, not me. Job in his deep trial, he says, *'Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity'*. (Job 31 verses 4-6) Those of you that know the hymns (I don't mean to bring the hymns as a reason for doctrine but sometimes they can breathe the spirits of God's people), now John Berridge says in Hymn 710 the first verse,

No wisdom of man can spy out his heart;
The Lord only can show his hidden part;
Nor yet are men willing to have the truth told;
The sight is too killing for pride to behold.

That is, God revealing truth about us to us.

Anne Steele, beautiful hymn 1085, in verse 2, she wants to know her own state,

Here let me search my inmost mind,
And try its real state to find,
The secret springs of thoughts explore,
And call my words and actions o'er.

But in the last verse, she wants the Lord to do the searching,

Search, Lord, O search my inmost heart,
And light, and hope, and joy impart;
From guilt and error set me free,
And guide me safe to heaven and thee.

But God's knowledge of all things will be a comfort to us.

In Job's deep trial he says, *'But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold'*. (Job 23 verse 10) You think of dear Job in his great trial, friends accusing him in one way, misjudged by his wife, *'Curse God and die'*. You will have trials; I will have trials. Trials where you think, the Lord knows the truth of the matter, I just have to lay it before the Lord and whatever men say or whatever men judge, he knows exactly the truth of the matter. You think of dear Peter, how he was brought there on the lake, and three times when the Lord is saying to him 'Lovest thou me?', each time he has recourse, 'Thou knowest', 'Thou knowest', 'Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee'. Peter before had said in John 16 verse 30, *'now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God'*.

The scriptures also set forth how we know we are of truth

We have in Romans 8 verse 16, *'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God'*: and then in 1 John 3 verse 24, *'He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us'*. But we can also reflect on what Christ did for us. We heard this morning of the effect on a believer's life in daily life if we are following the word, if we are following Christ, if we are a Christian. And so we have in 1 John 3 verse 16 -18 *'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth'*. And he finishes this portion with this, ***'And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him'***. These are clear statements on what is truth, ***'Hereby we know we are of truth'***, it's having the effect, if we believe that Christ died for us it will have an effect on how we interact with those around us, the same as forgiving one another. *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:"* (Matthew 6 verse 14) Why? If you have got a sense of the truth of pardon and forgiveness, then that will also affect how we deal with others.

I want to just conclude with God's word for the days that we are living in.

You might like to turn to your Bibles just for this portion, in 2 Timothy 3 and I'm just going to pick out a few verses down this passage. Verse 1, *'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come'*. These are last days from Christ to the end of the world. He speaks then of those that are in those last days, these are actually in the churches because they do have a form of God but we have in verse 5, *'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away'*.

Remember our first scriptures on what is truth? We have the word of God, we have the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the Holy Spirit, *'tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high'*. In these last days there will be those who deny the power. Verse 7, *'Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth'*. What is truth? It is people learning and learning and never come to it, because it is only really revealed by the Spirit, and the truth of salvation in their souls and personal interest of it and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, in verse 10 we have, *'But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution'*. And the end is the verse we have already read to you, verses 16 and 17, *'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works'*. It's a good chapter to keep in mind, a good chapter to realise these are perilous times and that the truth that is known is by the Spirit and there will be those who will really persecute us if we walk according to that precious truth.

Now I realise, the same as the Lord's servant this morning did, it's a vast vast subject, I would have liked to have spoken more of Gospel truth, and certainly I would say, ***the great message of the gospel, the great truth of the Bible is the message of the gospel.*** And we should always remember that. Our Lord, we heard from his testimony to Pilate, *'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice'*. (John 18 verse 37)

We know that He came to redeem His people, to save them from their sins. His two main aspects of His work. His whole life to work out a righteousness to impute or impart to those that believe on His name, and to lay down His life for a ransom for His people on Calvary's tree. It is the precious blood of Christ that puts away sin and it is by faith in Him that we are saved, and that righteousness is imputed to us. *'Not of works lest any man should boast'*. (Ephesians 2 verse 9)

But again, that is a vast vast subject, the truth, the message of the gospel. But may we be very clear, what is truth. Remember the Trinity, remember the word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of truth. ***Truth is reality perceived by God, not us, by God.***

