

## LIVING WITH TRUTH

2 Peter 1:3-4, 10-21

There is a lot of information that is available on the internet. About once a month I will get an email that has a dire warning about some really bad virus that may be sent in an email or there is some pending legislation that will shut down all the churches in the country. Some people just see these things (apparently believe them) and pass them along to others. Usually, if a little checking is done, it becomes evident that there is no truth in what is being claimed. The question of truth arises all the time in the political realm and we are seeing such questions in business dealings being more prevalent than they were several decades ago. That should cause us to ask the question that Pilate asked of Jesus: “What is truth?” That question was prompted by a statement that Jesus had just made where He gave as clear a statement as we can find as to why He came into the world. In John 18:37, He said “To this end I was born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.”

Ironically, Jesus had answered Pilate’s question in His prayer time before His arrest. In John 17:17 Jesus said “Sanctify them (His followers) through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.” If we really want the truth, then we must start with the Word of God.

### Display Your Relationship – 1:3-4, 10-11

<sup>3</sup> seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup> For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup> for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. 2 Peter 1:3-4, 10-11 (NASB95)

It helps us to realize that we are dealing with God Who is all powerful as He demonstrated in the creation and as He demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus from death. His power is not of earthly origin but is divine and by that power He has provided everything that we need for life and godliness (or a godlike life). Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden was that man could become like God in knowledge by disobeying God. The truth of matter is that we become like God in character (holiness, righteousness) by obedience to Him and His word and thus become eligible to participate in His knowledge and power. Some groups of that day (the Gnostics) made claims of having special knowledge that allowed them to progress spiritually. There are such groups today that make the same error. We are given all the knowledge we need in Jesus Christ to be transformed and grow in the character of God and “be partakers of the divine nature.” The other choice that we have is to continue in the way of the natural world and experience degradation and corruption. There is no neutrality. We are either growing or degrading.

What does it mean that God has called us by His own glory and excellence? This can be taken to mean that people who are enslaved by sin are able to see in the special nature of Jesus (glory) and in His moral excellence (virtue as seen in His sinless life) hope for themselves if they put their trust in Him. Because of this, they are drawn to Him for deliverance and salvation.

It is also by or through His glory and virtue that He provides the promises upon which our hope is based and by standing on (putting our faith in) these promises we are transformed into the image of Christ (that is, we take on His divine nature). The alternative is to be trapped in the corruption that results from following uncontrolled natural desires (the lusts of the flesh) that are part of the world’s way of living.

Skipping to verse 10, we see that Peter encouraged these Christians to be diligent in “practicing these things” which he had listed in verses 5 - 8. This simply means that we are to be eager, earnest and energetic in our daily lives to apply those virtues that give evidence that we are being transformed into the image of Christ.

Eager: Even though our faith is the key factor in our Christian experience, for by it we enter into our new life in Christ, it is not the only virtue that God has provided for us. If we do not take some initiative (diligence or eagerness) for growth then we will be as the person who buys a ticket to the amusement park and then doesn’t take the initiative to go to the various areas to enjoy them. Peter wrote that we should give “all diligence” to the opportunities (identified in verses 5-8) at hand.

Earnest: Faith is the starting point and it is by faith that we participate in all the rest of God's promises. We are to add to that faith, virtue or worthiness – strength of mind and body. We might use a term such as “reliability” to capture the same meaning. Peter is saying that it is important that God, as well as people, can count on you. That is a Godlike quality. Above all, we know that we can count on God. The next thing we need to add is knowledge. I believe that every Christian has access to revelation knowledge that comes to us from God. This is knowing beyond understand. It is a knowing that is alignment with the word of God. It is our responsibility to seek after such knowledge and to be sensitive to it as God reveals it to us. It is a matter of competency in being a Christian.

Energetic: Jesus (when He was 12 years old) told Mary that had to be “about His Father's business.” Taking action or “being about the business at hand” is a critically important part of success. We would not think very highly of a person who was in business and did not know anything about what he was selling or a physician that didn't know anything about medicine. We would think that they were incompetent. Just knowing is not enough, we must give our understanding, knowledge and wisdom value by acting on the sound ideas that these virtues produce.

Beyond that, we are to exercise self-control in all that we do. Being well balanced is important for a healthy (both physically and spiritually) life. Without self-control we can let the good keep us away from the better and the better keep us away from the best. We might get sidetracked in life if we forget to focus and to continue to press toward the goal. I guess in that way, self-control and perseverance (patience) work together.

Godliness is both an awareness and reverence for God and it is taking on the character and nature of God, incorporating it in our life from the inside out. God, by the Holy Spirit, indwells us and as we surrender more and more of ourselves to Him, His life will be more evident in us. Flowing out of reverence for God and having His life in us, we will find that element of mercy that is characteristic of God working out in our lives toward other people. The final and ultimate character that we can attain to is to be able to walk in Godlike love which loves regardless of the worthiness of the object being loved and loves regardless of the cost.

These “things” (verse 10 in KJV) are what success is all about in the Christian life. These will assure that your life will bear fruit and be pleasing to God. If we are not growing in grace, we are like the person that gets into the amusement park and then forgot why he came. It is as if he is blind to what God has for him. It is important that we validate the genuineness of our faith by growth, maturity, and bearing fruit.

One thing Peter is **not** advocating here is that were are doing these “things” to earn or insure our salvation. These virtues simply give evidence and assurance that we are who we confess to be and they also provide the very means by which we can participate in and enjoy the

benefits of a vibrant and healthy relationship with God.

### Defend Your Testimony – 1:12-18

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been established in the truth which is present with *you*. <sup>13</sup> I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, <sup>14</sup> knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. <sup>15</sup> And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind. <sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup> For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— <sup>18</sup> and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 2 Peter 1:12-18 (NASB95)

If we know the truth about something, do we have an obligation to share that truth with others and then to keep reminding them of what you have already told them? This sense of obligation was a driving force in Peter’s life. He realized the importance of walking in the truth of God’s revelation as a means for people to get the maximum benefit of their time on earth and to enhance what they will have (their rewards) in eternity. If you think about the consequences, what could be more important?

How can we “always be ready” so that we can follow the example set for us by Peter? This may be the same idea that Paul expressed in his advice to be “instant, in season and out of season.” The first requirement is that we must first know the truth and see the application of the truth to various situations that we encounter in life. Doing this association of relating what we see happening all around us to the word of God takes some discipline at first and then it becomes somewhat routine as we train our thinking to makes those connections. Thinking in this way helps to stir up such truths in our own minds and makes it easier to bring out such reminders when we are interacting with others.

I prune my apple trees late in the winter each year. As I am working on this job, I am thinking about how pruning will help enhance the production of fruit on that tree and several years ago, I saw a connection between good pruning practices and what is needed in the church if it is to produce much fruit. One of the main targets in pruning a tree is to remove the many water sprouts. These are the small diameter switches that usually grow straight up and show no sign of having any fruit buds. They sap the tree of nutrients that could be useful in producing fruit. This reminds me of people in the church who spring up and make a prideful show of themselves but produce no fruit. Another target in pruning branches is the branch that is growing into the interior of the tree as opposed to those that growing outward. Those that are directed inwardly are removed since they create clutter that blocks out the light and reduces air circulation so that the tree develops mold and other diseases. So many of us in the church are far more interested in more Bible Studies, discussion groups, and things of that nature but have little tendency to reach out to others. The third target is any deadwood that has lost its vibrancy and just harbors destructive insects and disease.

One of the objectives that Peter had was to teach and remind people of the truth so that they would be able to recall it and apply it long after he was gone. This would tell us that our teaching and reminders should be memorable and make a lasting impression. Things that had happened in his life had made a lasting impression on him. He reminded his readers that he had seen what had happen on the mount of transfiguration and he had heard the voice of God confirming that Jesus of Nazareth was God’s beloved Son, in Whom He was well pleased. An experience like that leaves no doubt as to the reality of the truth of the Scriptures and provides tremendous confidence when that is coupled by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the

life of a believer.

Depend on Inspired Scripture – 1:19-21

<sup>19</sup> *So we have the prophetic word made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NASB95)

Prior to the advent of the Messiah, Israel was encouraged and admonished by the prophets and poets to obey the commandments and follow the precepts that had been given to them over the course of many centuries. Evidence abounds in the historical accounts of the nation of Israel that God held them accountable to trust and obey His word. With the coming of the Messiah and with the fulfillment (confirmation) of multiple prophecies and with the eyewitness accounts of all that Jesus did during His earthly ministry, we can be even more confident in God's promises as well as being more diligent in obeying His precepts. The overwhelming abundance of evidence of confirmed prophecies gives clear testimony that the prophecies were from God and not just what some person thought. Since these prophecies were given by God, then we would be well advised to interpret them in light of the character of God and not twist them to mean some idea we might have.

Summary: Living with truth should first of all influence all our relationships with others. We need to know the foundational basis for the truth we have and be able to stand firm in our belief. Finally, we need to make sure that whatever we think is truth aligns with the absolute truth of God's word.