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THE TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE

LIVING TRUTH

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THE TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE

Article 4: Living the Truth

So far in this symposium on discovering truth, we have come to know that Jesus **is** the truth, that we must empty ourselves of manmade doctrines and interpretations in order to **prepare for** the truth, and that we must primarily look to the gospel accounts in order to **receive** the truth. Now, we will offer suggestions on how to **live** the truth.

Most Christians focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And while those matters are important, the more important thing is his life and the way he lived it. It is his matchless life that Jesus wants us to remember:

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” – *John 14:6*

And as the Apostle Paul reiterated:

“For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how **much more**, having been reconciled, **shall we be saved through his life!**” – *Romans 5:10*

When Jesus began his ministry, he laid out the parameters of all that he intended to teach and all that he expects of us. These matters are recorded in the book of Matthew, chapters 5 through 7, often referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. We encourage you to read through these chapters and imagine yourself in the audience. Know that his message was not just for the first century Jews, but for all mankind, everywhere, at every time – then, now, and in the future. This is what we mean when we say that Jesus’ teachings have “an eternal nature.”

As an overview, the first thing Jesus did, was to restore man’s dignity. He let them know that though they were suffering, God had not forgotten them, and that, in fact, their lowly condition put them in the favored position of being open and ready to receive the good news that he wanted to share. (*Matthew 5:3-11*)

Next, he told them that rather than hide in the shadows of society as they had been doing, they should stand up, and courageously let their God-given light shine so that they can be a positive influence on others to develop courage to let their light shine and glorify the Father. (*Matthew 5:13-16*)

Next, Jesus assured them that he was not there to tear down or destroy their manner of worship. He wanted to uplift it. He explained that they were following the letter of the law; whereas he wanted them to follow the spirit of the law. This is the first step in becoming a spiritual person. (*Matthew 5:17-47*)

Then, he told them the ultimate goal in their journey of spiritual growth, the one thing the Father desires from all of his children:

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
– *Matthew 5:48*

In chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Matthew, Jesus gives practical suggestions on how to achieve the ultimate goal of divine perfection. While we may not be able to attain to the perfection status in the flesh as Jesus did, we can wholeheartedly pursue that goal. To the Father, it is not so much what we are, but what we strive to be.

“For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.” – *Psalms 103:14*

Again, we suggest that all who seek truth, read these three chapters contemplatively and in their entirety and endeavor to see themselves in the counsel. Rejoice in those areas where you find yourselves in harmony with the divine counsel. And honestly discover where you lack or where you need improvement, and then prove yourselves worthy of the truth you seek to live.

In addition to learning and applying what Jesus taught, living the truth involves taking on his life – imitating him. Jesus described it this way to his disciples:

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” – *Matthew 16:24*

And he described it this way to the Jews who followed him around:

“Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. **Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.** Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.” – *John 6:53-57*

Both of these expressions have symbolic and spiritual meaning. Picking up the cross means being willing to accept the good with the bad, the blessings with the tribulations. And eating and drinking his flesh and blood has symbolic meaning in connection with the Memorial Supper, but it also means taking on the life he lived in the flesh – stepping into his shoes, so to speak, so that when people see you, they see the Christ! It has never been more true that ‘you are what you eat.’ We can share an experience to illustrate what it means to ‘eat and drink the Christ.’

Several months ago, we were in communication with an Elder who served in a congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses. He had received the plain and open teachings of Jesus and felt he had to share this information with his body of Elders with whom he served. He was concerned that there would be a backlash that could result in his removal as an Elder and possibly being disfellowshipped as an apostate. Yet he was determined. He was willing to disown himself, and all the privileges and benefits that come with being an Elder, and pick up his torture stake, whether it resulted in a blessing or a punishment.

By stepping forward and letting his light shine, he was ‘eating and drinking the Christ.’ No matter what happened, this brother was openly confessing, siding with, and choosing the Christ. And whether he was received well by man or not, he was assured of his place

in heaven.

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and **whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”**

– *Matthew 10:32-39*

To this brother’s surprise, his body of Elders did not overreact. They listened respectfully and since they could not find anything wrong with what the brother was sharing, they decided to turn the matter over to the Circuit Overseer. The Circuit Overseer likewise could not find anything wrong or in error, yet he explained that the plain and open teachings of Jesus are not what is taught by the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The brother was allowed to maintain his position as an Elder while the Circuit Overseer contacted ‘headquarters.’

We do not know what happened with the conversations with ‘headquarters,’ but we can tell you that the courage of this one Elder caused his fellow Elders and the Circuit Overseer to look at the scriptures with fresh eyes. These men became convinced and began sharing the plain and open teachings with all who asked about it. By the time the 2013 Remembrance Supper arrived, 345 members of the congregations who met together partook of the emblems, including practically the entire body of Elders and Ministerial Servants, as well as the Circuit Overseer! All because one brother had the courage to ‘eat and drink the Christ.’ That is living the truth!

As you can see, living the truth reaches further than our conduct. Truth should affect our thinking, our reasoning, and our conclusions. Once we begin to drink the cup of the Christ and take on the divine yoke, we begin to understand who we are and where we belong, namely sons of God and heirs to the heavenly kingdom. (*Romans 8:16-17*) As Paul confirmed:

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” – *Galatians 3:26-27*

‘Clothed yourselves with Christ’ means to have a clearer realization of the heavenly hope and the true value and meaning for life.

“The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” **But we have the mind of Christ.”**

– *1 Corinthians 2:14-16*

Having the mind of Christ is how we ‘discerned only through the Spirit.’ It is more than knowing where Jesus went or what he said and did. It means we must strive to understand Jesus internally – his motives and intents. We need to know not only **what** he did, but **why** he did it; not just **what** he said, but **why** he said it; not just **what** he thought, but **how** he thought. We must learn to look at life the way Christ did, filtering all matters through his eyes.

Daily we should ask ourselves the popular phrase “What would Jesus do?” And then conform our thinking and actions. We are not suggesting that you imitate Jesus’ physical life, but that you imitate Jesus’ spiritual life – the way he dealt with people and the way he worshiped the Father. In this way, we each will become unique expressions of the Father to His glory.

As an example of getting to know Jesus internally, consider his encounter with the crowds:

“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.” – *Mark 6:30-34*

You can develop the mind of Christ by contemplating: What does this encounter tell me about Jesus’ internally? About his concern for people who are not properly ‘shepherded?’ About his feelings toward his disciples? Then contemplate whether you can adopt Jesus’ thinking on these matters and, if so, under what types of circumstances. And finally, resolve to do so.

You can follow this method of review, contemplation, application and conviction to many, if not all, of Jesus’ encounters with people.

- Consider Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman (*John 4:1-42*). How does Jesus view women? How does he view people of different religions?
- Consider Jesus’ encounter with the woman who was caught in adultery (*John 8:3-11*). How does Jesus view personal sin? How does he view judging?
- Consider Jesus’ encounter at the temple of overturning tables (*Matthew 21:12-14*). How does Jesus view sins against the Father’s worship? How does he view the people who are entangled in it?
- Consider Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisees in the temple (*Matthew 12:1-14*). How does Jesus view doctrines that interfere with the law of love? How does he deal with those who are misleading people?

- Consider Jesus' encounter with his apostles who complained about another preacher of the good news (*Luke 9:49-50*). How does Jesus view the ministry of others?

These are just a few examples. All who truly want the mind of Christ should closely examine all of Jesus' encounters and see what can be learned and imitated.

We also suggest you do the same with his teachings. We note that Jesus did not lay down laws for personal conduct. Instead, he used teaching tools, such as parables, wise sayings, and illustrations to show the spirit of the law. Those who 'had an ear to hear the spirit' in the messages could develop their personal character on those principles. For example:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.”— *Matthew 5:38-41*

This scripture is mistakenly used to promote passivism. But that was not Jesus' message. Jesus always proceeded from a position of courage and conviction. He was telling them that when they are confronted with a situation that appears to be a 'no-win,' take control of the situation. Jesus was in essence saying 'a slap to the cheek cannot defeat me, neither can a slap to both cheeks.' 'Taking my inner garment cannot defeat me, neither can taking my outer garment.' 'Pressing me to walk for a mile in your service cannot defeat me, neither can walking two.' The point was that when there is nothing we can do to extricate ourselves from an unfavorable situation, we do not let those situations defeat us. This mind-set is the mind of Christ.

The gospel accounts are full of lessons for courageous living. More than any other quality, courage seems to be lacking most in the sons of God. We personally know many who know the truth, but hide their lights under a basket because they are afraid that others might see it. They 'go along with the program' so that they won't draw attention to themselves. What they fail to realize is that by remaining silent, they are complicit in the error, especially those who are taking the lead in teaching error. Though these men and women are privately confessing the Christ, they are not openly confessing him. It is the open confession 'before men' (*Matthew 10:32*) that causes the reciprocal confession by Christ to the Father.

The method of putting on the mind of Christ is simple, but it takes real effort. Only firsthand faith in truth by living it will create real courage. All lovers of truth will stand up and step forward; whereas the cowards will shrink back and turn again to the doctrines of enslavement. These may be harsh words for some, but it is time we grow up to the full stature of the Christ. As Paul wrote:

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **until we all reach unity in the faith** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining **to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every

wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. **Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.**” – *Ephesians 4:11-15*

Finally, by living the truth, we can come to know God. Jesus well knew that God can be known only by the realities of experience.

“Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”– *John 14:8-10*

The Father can never be understood by the mere teachings of the mind. Philip is an example of this. Philip and the other apostles had been taught directly by Jesus, and yet they had not comprehended the connection between Jesus and the Father. Ultimately, Jesus was a revelation of the Father. Our concept of the Father will equal our capacity to perceive spiritual and divine matters through experience.

Yes, we learn about the Father from Jesus by observing the divinity of his life, not by a mental recognition of his teachings. We can observe the life of the Master through the writing, but we can only know the Father by knowing what and who Jesus was. And we can only know Jesus by living his spiritual life.

“For “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?”
But we have the mind of Christ.”– *1 Corinthians 2:16*

Thus, we better understand the statement that Jesus is ‘the way and the truth and the life.’ (*John 14:6*) And it is only through knowing Jesus that we can comply with the edict “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (*Matthew 5:48*)

Putting on the mind of Christ is one step further in our journey toward Christian freedom. Now that we know how to put it on, we must allow ourselves to be led by spirit.

“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.” – *Romans 8:14*

That is the subject of the next article in the series, **Being Led to Truth.**

“Elaia Luchnia”

