

Truth (Part 2)

The Search for Truth

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I am going to continue the sermon that I began four weeks ago in regard to truth. We are going to go back to John 18, to the very scripture I believe that we began with or was very near to the beginning. Jesus is before Pilate and Pilate said to Him,

John 18:37 "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world [now it is this next phrase:], that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

What we are going to concentrate on here is, "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Of course that inspired, or got a response from, Pilate because he said, "What is truth?" (verse 38) almost as if he were thinking about responding to the words of Jesus Christ.

But what I want us to see is that the difference between the converted and the unconverted person is the response to truth. "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Another way of putting that might be that the converted person humbles himself before truth.

I am sure that you would like to have that confirmed. We are going to go to John 8, that very famous chapter in which Jesus was confronted by the Jews and they had a discussion, a dialogue, over truth. That is when Jesus told them that they would know the truth and the truth would make them free, and the dialogue developed from that point on to where God (that is Jesus Christ) told those people that they were of their father the Devil.

John 8:45 "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me."

They were very definitely unconverted. They were not responding to the truth. They did not believe Him. He said,

John 8:46-47 "Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words;. . ."

Is that not similar to what Jesus said to Pilate? The person who is of the truth hears His voice, and of course the implication is response. He who is of God—that is, the converted person—hears God's words.

John 8:47 ". . . therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

Now that is understandable. I do not think that there is anything confusing about that. We ought to be able to see that and agree with it completely. What is difficult is the yielding to the truth.

I am going to quote from a man by the name of W.E.H. Lecky. He is the author of a book called *The History of European Morals*, and this comes from page 189. He is discussing responding to truth. He says:

To love truth sincerely means to pursue it with an earnest, conscientious, unflagging zeal. It means to be prepared to follow the light of evidence, even to the most unwelcome conclusions; to labor earnestly to emancipate the mind from early prejudices; to resist the current of desires and the refracting influence of the passions; to proportion on all occasions conviction to evidence; and to be ready, if need be, to exchange the calm assurance for all the suffering of a perplexed and disturbed mind. To do this is very difficult and very painful, but it is clearly involved in the notion of earnest love of truth.

The man said a mouthful here and those who are going to respond to the truth of God are going to find the pursuit and response to truth no less difficult. Jesus said in another place that those who hear His Words, who respond to Him, are going to find every once in a while families are broken

up as a result. One sees the truth. One understands it. One begins to apply it but the others in the family do not see it in the same way. They do not respond in the same way, and the family begins to undergo a crisis as a result of the conversion of the one person.

So Jesus said, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth, but a sword." In another place the sword is compared to the Spirit, the essence of His mouth, that is of His Word. What comes out of Jesus' mouth is always going to be true. Those who are of the truth are going to respond. That response is very frequently going to be fraught with all kinds of difficulty, and they are going to be pressured on every side to shrug it off and to say, "Oh, it doesn't really matter." So they "stuff it" as I said last week in the sermon on Thanksgiving, deceiving themselves that there is not going to be much of a consequence in turning away from truth.

Truth is not easy to accept whenever it cuts across the grain of our belief, or even more seriously, what we are currently practicing, especially if that practice gives us a certain measure of pleasure or a certain measure of acceptance before those that we admire and respect.

The very fact that we are here, that you are listening to my voice, shows that this has a price that all of us have been willing to pay. But it is also a price that all of us are unwilling to pay from time to time because we run across something that is extremely difficult for us to accept and do. We may be able to accept something as being true, and we would tell others that we believe that it is true, but to accept it to the point of making it a part of the conduct of our daily behavior is something that is very difficult to do.

We could point to many examples, but just to give you one example that we can all relate to, every one of us I am sure knows people who believe that the Sabbath ought to be kept, but they are not keeping it. They will believe that Jesus kept the Sabbath. They will believe that God's holy days ought to be kept and that Christmas and Easter are pagan, but they will not do it themselves. Why? Because it is too big of a price for them to pay at this time.

Now this is the principle that we are dealing with here. We need to think of this in the light of what Jesus said in John 18:37 with the implication being that they not only hear, but they respond. Tie that together with John 8:47

where Jesus nailed the Jews down and He said that the very fact that they were not responding to the things that He spoke was proof that they were of Satan the Devil. That can be a very difficult truth to accept because we do not like to think of ourselves and our loved ones within those parameters, but we cannot blunt what Jesus said.

What we have to be careful of is this thing that I said that every one of us from time to time is unwilling to face up to some portion of the truth of God. So we delude ourselves. We deceive ourselves. We are self-deceived that somehow or another we will escape the penalty. (A little bit more of this later.)

Let us go back to Romans 1 where the apostle Paul was dealing with something like this, and in this case he was not talking about converted people. He was talking about unconverted people. There are some things that we can learn here.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Here we have the introductory statement. It is sort of like a cannon shot across the bow where Paul asserts that men "stuff the truth." Mankind does it. It is evident that God exists and that there is a Creator. And not only that there is a Creator, but this God also provides for His creation. He cares for it. He is concerned about it. He loves it. But men still stuff that and they suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Romans 1:21-23 Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things

Romans 1:25 . . . who exchanged the truth of God for the lie. . .

In this case the truth was the evidence manifested at creation that there is a Creator God. The lie, in this context, is the idol. They exchanged the fact of a Creator for something that they could see and say, "This is our god."

Romans 1:25 . . . and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.

In Paul's explanation, truth comes very close to being personified, that is, given life. And it is almost as if truth, being a living thing, is held down, strangled, and throttled until its very life is almost gone. That is why he says here (I substituted the word "stuffed") the truth is "stuffed" and if stuffing of the truth is allowed to continue unchecked, then it is inevitably going to lead to idolatry.

Now catch that. That is very important to pick from what Paul is saying. The idolatry will be a direct consequence of ignoring the evidence of the truth of the existence of the Creator God, because if that is ignored or stuffed or suppressed, then what is the natural consequence? The natural consequence of that is man is left on his own to devise his own means of worshipping a god.

Is man going to come up with the truth about the Creator God on his own? It is impossible. Absolutely impossible. Because whatever representation he comes up with is going to automatically be a lie because he does not know what God looks like since he is stuffing the existence of a Creator God. He does not really know how that Creator God thinks. He does not know the Creator God's purpose. He does not know the whys, the wherefores, or the hows of that Creator. So whatever he comes up with is going to be idolatry.

In their case these people produced a wooden or metal statue that they worshipped. In our case, we will not come up with something of that ilk, but it will be idolatry nonetheless in the form of some kind of an attitude, some kind of conduct, because we refuse to repent and to face up to the truth that is evident in the Word of God. Even in our case, even though we do not

make a statue, it is inevitably going to lead to idolatry when we reject the truths of God.

What do you think is going to be the most common idol that we come up with? Ourselves. We are almost inevitably led to the worship of the self when the truth of God is rejected because we turn our attentions inward. There is, in effect, nothing higher or greater than ourselves that we can come up with. So mankind ends up worshipping itself.

In verse 18, Paul mentions the wrath of God. He says, ". . . the wrath of God is revealed" When this is seen in the context of the first three chapters of the book of Romans, we can begin to see that he is not referring to God's anger or His attitude. He is not saying that God is angry. He is not saying that God is vindictive or exasperated. He is describing the inevitable process of cause and effect.

In more modern language Paul is saying in these three chapters that all systems in the universe work according to law - that there is a moral order in the world, and sooner or later the person who transgresses is going to suffer. We see this (or I see this) clearly demonstrated in regard to the AIDS epidemic here in the United States and in other places. Even though there is plenty of information available describing or evidencing the direct connection between a lifestyle and the disease, at least the homosexual portion of the society does not seem to be turning away from their lifestyle. They are stuffing the truth, the evidence, which is available.

Did you know that though the homosexuals make up only two percent of the population of the United States, they have eighty percent of the AIDS cases—those that are known? It is apparently continuing pretty much unabated. Apparently the evidence has not affected homosexual behavior. They are continuing to go on in the lifestyle. They are denying the fact that the lifestyle itself is the producer of the AIDS epidemic.

We see this in other areas of high risk in society in regard to drug usage. We see it in regard to some things like smoking, alcoholism, or obesity. Truth, in this case (not God's truth but just truth), is just stuffed. It is run from, but it does not lead the people to repentance, to turning their life. All of us do this to some extent. All of us do it.

The wrath of God in Romans 1:18 is simply that God does nothing. He simply leaves man to his devices. He abandons man, you might say, and in verse 28 that is confirmed.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind,

He just let them go on and He lets His laws take their course and the penalty will come. It will come.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

Even when the evidence is presented (that is, the truth is presented) most people will not change. The reason I am going through this in such detail is that I want us to see that human nature is still in us and there still works in us what Paul calls the law of sin and death, and it is working overtime to keep us stuffing the truth, whether it is God's truth or other truth. We simply follow the natural course in many cases, and we refuse to face up to the fact that we are confronted with truth and we are running away from it.

So then perhaps one of the most severe punishments that He can give us is to simply, in a sense, turn His back on us for awhile and let us muddle around in what we have produced by our sin. He lets His laws take their course and the penalty will come. These three chapters, Romans 1-3, show that sin, that is the breaking of laws, is ultimately self-destructive. Even if God does not intervene, it will destroy us. You break the laws of agriculture and the harvest fails. You break the laws of architecture, and the building collapses. You break the laws of health, and your health suffers. The soul that sins, it shall die.

I am not saying that God will never intervene in an attempt to get us to turn around. He loves us too much to allow Himself to do that, and He will do something to bring us up short, grab us by the nape of the neck, we might say, and try to get us to face up to the fact that we are sometimes running from His truth. He will do this in an attempt to get us to repent.

We must freely choose to submit to God's truth and not allow human nature to deceive us into somehow thinking that we are such that we can get away with it. Sin is always a lie. Remember Romans 1:25, ". . . who exchanged the truth of God for the lie." Sin is always a lie because the sinner deceives himself into thinking that sin will make him happy, but in the end it ruins life both for him and the others who are a part of his life, and maybe not even a part of it. That is what Romans 1—3 is teaching us.

Is it not better to acknowledge truth, to repent, and to escape the penalty that is going to come? Sure it is.

My concern in this sermon is to help us to appreciate the importance of truth. I hope in the beginning here, in laying the foundation for this sermon, that I have begun to stir your minds in regard to the appreciation of truth, the truth that we already possess, and hopefully make us more willing to use what we already have. Then toward the end of the sermon to show the part the Holy Spirit plays in revelation of truth, because we can be sure that because God loves us, He will always work to give us new insights into human nature and to reveal more of His spiritual truth - things about Himself.

We have already seen that the use of truth is what makes the difference between the converted and the unconverted, and that the inevitable working of God's laws will bring blessing or cursing, depending on whether truth is used or not used. It does not take a converted mind to appreciate this.

Listen to this quote that I am going to give you from Charles Lindbergh. In 1927 he was the first man to fly across the Atlantic on a solo flight from roughly New York to Paris. Beginning the quote, he said:

In my youth science was more important to me than either man or God. I worshipped science. Its advance had surpassed man's wildest dreams. It took many years for me to discover that science, with all its brilliance, lights only a middle chapter of creation. I saw the aircraft I loved destroying the civilization I expected it to save. Now I understand spiritual truth is more essential to a nation than the mortar in its cities walls. For when the actions of a people are undergirded by spiritual truth, there is safety. When spiritual truths

are rejected, it is only a matter of time before civilization will collapse. We must understand spiritual truths and apply them to our modern life. We must draw strength from the almost forgotten virtues of simplicity, humility, contemplation, and prayer. It requires a dedication beyond science, beyond self, but the rewards are great and it is our only hope.

The English word "truth" is a fairly accurate translation of the Hebrew and Greek words that it replaces. Accurate though it is, it sometimes falls short of capturing the Hebrew and Greek words in all their subtlety. The primary root of the Hebrew word that is translated into the English word "truth," means "to sustain" and "to support." It gives the picture of something undergirding or providing a foundation for. The basic meaning is more equivalent to our English words, "firm," "solid," "reliable," and "lasting." It implies the ability to remain unchanged and whole. It is a word that implies "integrity," meaning "without flaw."

Thus in modern translations (this is in the Old Testament) where the King James Version might say "truth," modern versions will say, "faithful," "truthful," "trustworthy," "loyal," "steadfast," "constant," or "unchangeable," "sure," or "reliable." Therefore, in the Old Testament, truth is not so much contrasted with lying (though that is there) as it contrasted with fickleness. You see, God is true. God is unchanging. He is constant. He is someone that one can put his trust in. "I am God," He says. "I change not."

In the New Testament, the Old Testament usage is there, but the Greek usage is much closer to the modern English usage. "Truth" in the New Testament means, "reality," "genuine," and "authentic facts." It is reality as contrasted to what is false, what is imagination, or what is mere appearance. Truth in the New Testament is almost always seen as that which is in accordance with or in harmony with God's purpose. As when Jesus says, "I am truth." He means, "What I say and do is always in harmony with God's purpose." He embodied it.

In the New Testament truth is also seen as being hidden. It is something that needs to be revealed, but it is also seen as being dynamic, that it has intrinsic power, almost as if it has a life on its own. It is seen as being at warfare against that which is false, and it always complies with the will of God.

In two previous sermons, we spent some time in Jeremiah 5 and I did that because it painted a rather vivid picture of how bad things got in Judea just before the Jews went into captivity. It also showed us something that each one of us has to consider very carefully and that is there is a perversity in human nature that would rather hear lies than truth.

Remember how that chapter ended? "My people love to have it so." They loved to have lies preached to them because it was something with which they could agree because it did not demand of them that they change. It did not make them uncomfortable. It was something that fit in with the conscience that had been developed in the society in which they were living.

They had what the New Testament calls, "itching ears." They did not like to hear a prophet telling things that made them squirm, or gave them feelings of guilt, or made them feel as though they were less than they thought of themselves. They did not like to have somebody painting for them, picturing for them, higher standards than they felt they could reach. Thus, they loved to have the prophets preach to them things that were smooth and easy to take.

People rationalized, whenever a true prophet of God did come along and tell them the truth of God, by saying, "It won't happen to me." Now they may not have actually said that to themselves, but the fact that their conduct did not change revealed what was going on in their heart of hearts, because if they really believed what the true prophet had said, then they would have affected a changed in their life. So, in effect, in their heart of hearts, they were telling God not only did they like it, but they were also telling themselves that "It won't happen to me."

I want you to connect this with Romans the first chapter. This is what Paul is describing there. The wrath of God is revealed in the natural workings of the law of His creation, and if people will not change and God abandons them to a debased mind—that is, to their own mind—then the natural cause and effect of the law-abiding universe will take effect and these people will die in their sins. But not before creating a society, a culture, that will be so difficult, so violent, so perverse, to live in that it makes living very unenjoyable and fiercesome for the ones afraid to walk down the street or go into certain sections of town, or to go to the movies because you cannot be

sure what you are going to see on the screen, and on and on that kind of thing goes.

The apostle Paul—the *converted* apostle Paul, writing about twenty years after he was converted—said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7) One chapter before that he admitted that the law of sin and death was still working in him.

Are you convinced, brethren, those of you who have the Spirit of God, that the law of sin and death is still working in us, and that there is a perversity within us that wants to turn us away from the truth of God, and that we would rather feel comfortable without the truth of God than to confront something that we know within us is not in harmony with the character, the mind, or the standards of God? Jeremiah hit the nail right on the head. He said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) It is there.

If we are ever going to deal with the truth of God in a meaningful way, we have to first deal with the self-deception that is within each and every one of us. There is in us, to a greater or lesser degree, the willingness to reject truth before it can lodge as a permanent part of our character. Do you remember what Amos said to the people in his day? He said:

Amos 6:3 "Woe to you who put the day, the evil day, far away."

That is what occurs when we break discipline with the truth of God.

Let us go back to the book of Job. You remember the context here, how Job had been smitten by God and he was suffering a great deal. Job did not know that God was actually the One who was working with him. He did not really see God in the picture in the way that we can see here in the pages of the book of Job. Job was suffering horribly, really, as God put him to the test, and he was wondering why he was suffering so.

His three friends came and a dialogue took place between Job and his three friends, with Job mostly defending himself, and the three friends accusing Job, each one from his own perspective. Here in chapter 8, Bildad is

beginning his discourse into why he felt that Job was in the condition he was in. Of course all three of these men thought that Job was a guilty sinner and that he was getting what he deserved. But each one came at Job from a little different perspective.

Each one of them thought that Job was guilty of breaking the laws of God, but as we find as the thing continues, he was not guilty. He was actually under a test that God was giving him. I am not saying here that Job is perfect, but Job was not guilty of the things that these people were accusing him of. Job simply did not realize that God had put him to a test that most of us would find extremely difficult.

Bildad comes up with something that we need to consider in relation to where this perversity that is within us came from, and why it is that we have such difficulty overcoming and dealing with it. In verse 8 he is telling Job,

Job 8:8 For inquire, please, of the former age, and consider the things discovered by their fathers;

He is telling Job, in effect, "Look back into history and there is a lot of wisdom there, and if you would just do that, why, you would find answers to your situation, because the ancients were wise and they had all this experience." What Bildad is saying is basically true. The ancients that he was talking about there, those people lived for hundreds of years, and they had a lot of time to learn the lessons of life. And there was a lot of wisdom in what those people possessed. I am sure that they passed much of that on to their descendants. He is telling Job, "Let's look back there and we will find answers to your dilemma." It is in verse 9 that he comes up with this thing that is so interesting.

Job 8:9-10 For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days on earth are a shadow. Will they not teach you and tell you, and utter words from their heart?

Brethren, we are but of yesterday. Where did you get what made you what you are? Are you not the sum total of the experiences that you have had in the past? Every one of us is that. Did the past not teach you, and you then are what the past has taught you?

Every single one of us up until the time of God's calling, have been helpless before the tyranny of the past. Every single one of us has been a helpless victim because we had no alternative. We simply absorbed whatever philosophy, first of all, that our parents subscribed to because it is in their homes that we had our first contact with society, with the culture. And whether or not they made any conscious effort to try to instill within us certain values, they nonetheless did it. We absorbed it because of the fact that we were around it and they were passing those things on to us.

All too often, our parent's lives were going nowhere. With very few exceptions, they had few very meaningful values attached to the way that they were living. Let us be honest. Human nature being what it is, we all tend to follow the line of least resistance and sink to the lowest common denominator our values will permit.

Frequently we do not like to deal with that, but I am telling you the truth. There are very few people in society—although there are some—who are willing to go against the culture in which they are living and establish higher standards for themselves than their culture. Instead what we do is that we have a very powerful tendency to pick up values that are lower than what we learned in our homes and go along with what the culture is doing. All too frequently what is on the street is not as high a value as even what our parents had. There is that principle at work. Like Paul said in II Timothy that evil men shall wax worse and worse. That is the natural direction of things. We just follow the line of least resistance.

Mostly what we do is what everybody else in our culture is doing. Or we do whatever those we admire and respect are doing so that we might fit in. Just this past week I heard a discussion on the radio here in Charlotte in which they were discussing what had been announced from a poll that had been taken over a number of years of teenagers, and they said that they went into premarital sex (fornication) mostly because everybody else was doing it, and not because they particularly enjoyed it. They did it because they wanted to be accepted into the group that they admired in school. They did not have the character to stand up on their own and set a higher standard for the rest of the group. Instead they went along with those that they wanted to be accepted by. That is the kind of thing that we are talking about.

All of us are victims of that process and that is why cultures degenerate, because that is the line of least resistance. And then, of course, what happens is the biblical principle where the land vomits them out and then things get a new start. There is a surge of righteousness within a nation because they finally recognize that the way that they have been living is what is causing them all the trouble and usually what arises is some rightwing dictator who restores a morality within a nation and they go all right for awhile, but then it starts back down the path again.

There is one other thing that we have to learn from this and that is, in picking up the traditions of our society that we are born into, it also produces or builds within us the prejudices and attitudes that provide the resistance to truth whenever it does come. Remember how Winston Churchill said he had observed in his life every so often people are hit by the truth, but they just pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and go on? Why? Because living like we have in the past produces prejudices against change.

Luke 5:36-39 Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"

You understand that the new wine represents the truth of God. The old wine represents the traditions of the culture that we have been born into—the one that has produced the prejudices in our mind that we do not want to get rid of whenever the new wine comes. We are the vessel, and if we do not have the willingness to change, then we will be "burst," the old wineskin by the new. A process of destruction begins to take place unless we become new.

Jesus understood. He understood the principle that was working against Him in His own life. Here He was coming with the good news that was really new to these people and what did they do? They hated it so much they rejected not only the message, but they also rejected and put to death the Messenger.

That lesson is in the Book so that we will understand how powerful this impulse is within us to reject the truth of God, and it is there working against truth that we feel comfortable with the old and we do not want to face up to the new. We make a rationalization, "Oh, it doesn't matter. It won't get me." We are in a sense gambling with the laws of God. As Paul showed in Romans 1—3, you cannot gamble against the laws of God and win. You are going to lose every time.

So why not face up to it? See, that is his point. Why not face up to it? Why not pay the price? Why not accept the truth of God? Why not repent and live?

Let us watch how this worked in Jesus' life. Let us go to John 7. How powerful the rejection of truth is, and why Jesus said this, is what is going to make the difference between the converted and the unconverted. What is going to make the difference is their approach to truth. The converted will face up to it and he will pay the price. The unconverted, even though it is given to him, will reject it because most of the time it is not that he does not recognize it, but it is because he does not want to pay the price. He is unwilling to make the sacrifice. He is unwilling to deny himself. He would rather live in his comfort than he would make his life uncomfortable, than to face up to truth.

Here in John 7, the Feast of Tabernacles is taking place. Jesus at first said He was not going to go. Then He did go and when He went up there, it says:

John 7:11-12 Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, "Where is He?" And there was much murmuring among the people concerning Him. Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the contrary, He deceives the people."

Down in verse 27 the argument was raging among the people:

John 7:27 "However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from."

They had a tradition amongst the Jewish people at that time, that when the Messiah came, He would just suddenly materialize and there He would be. Nobody would know where He was from.

Everybody who knows the Scriptures ought to know that is not true. The Bible plainly says in the book of Micah that the Savior would come out of Bethlehem. They knew that. It also says in the Old Testament that He would come out of the land of Naphtali. They knew that.

Were they facing up to the truth of the Scriptures? Was the information about where Jesus was born available to them? Yes it was. They knew that He was a son of David. They knew that His city was Bethlehem. All they had to do was check the records. All they had to do was ask Him. All they had to do was ask His family. They could have told them He was born of Bethlehem in Judea at such and such a time and that the family lived in the land of Naphtali and so both scriptures would have been fulfilled. Those pieces of truth would have fallen into place.

Instead, what are the people relying on? They are relying on fables. They are relying on the traditions that the Messiah would just suddenly materialize and there He would be.

John 7:40-43 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him.

This is in here I am sure at least partly to help us understand that when these people were confronted by the very embodiment of truth—Christ—there was confusion from one end of Judea to the other. Jesus said, "I am truth." Every word that came out of His mouth was truth, every action, every piece of conduct, all of His behavior, everything that He did, reflected the glory of God, which is truth. Call it skepticism, a perversity of human nature that

wants us to reject the truth of God. Of course as we are seeing from God's own Scripture another truth that it carries right through baptism and it is going to have to be dealt with by us.

In I Peter 1, Peter adds another piece of information that is helpful to us.

I Peter 1:17-19 And if you [Christians] call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear [that is, with reverential awe and respect], knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

A couple of sermons ago I spent some time going through Colossians 2:8-10. I did this because I wanted all of us to see that at their very best the philosophies that undergird the cultures of all people on this earth are nothing more than the reasoning of unconverted people. Remember (connect this to Romans 1) that God gave mankind over to a debased mind to do those things which are not convenient.

What God did, in effect, was to abandon society in that He allowed them to establish their governments, their cultures, and their religions. If that is what they wanted, God would allow men to do that, and He did. So the wrath of God is revealed in the fact that He allowed men to do this on their own. And what mankind produced were the cultures that we see all over the earth. At their very best, the philosophies that undergird the cultures—whether it be in Japan, China, India, Israel, the United States, Russia, Germany, France, Sweden; it matters not where—came out of the minds of man, and at their worst they are the product of the minds of demons working through men.

Let us connect I Peter 1:18 to that principle and to a couple of other principles that we have talked about now in this sermon. What have we been redeemed from? We have been redeemed from aimless conduct or the traditions of men. We have been redeemed from the philosophies that were produced by men of corrupt minds, or maybe even demons. We have been redeemed from those traditions, those cultures, those ways of life that have

instilled within us the traditions, the prejudices, the ways of thinking, and the ways of conduct that are at odds with the truth of God.

I think that is very meaningful and what Peter is saying here in I Peter 1 is that the very thing that we are called upon by God to do as a result of the revelation of His truth to us is to come out of what we have been learning from the time that we were babies. What that means is a processing of virtually everything that undergirds the thinking that we have learned early in this life.

Peter also tells us why. He said that it is aimless. I would like you to kill a deer without aiming the gun. If you do not aim the gun and you pull the trigger, the bullet is liable to go anywhere. It is aimless and that is what he is talking about here. Men's lives apart from the truth of God are aimless. They are going nowhere—nowhere near the target.

You know what Proverbs 29:18 says. "Where there is no vision [meaning a vision of the Kingdom of God], the people run wild." Their life is aimless. It is not going anywhere. It is just going wherever the philosophy they happen to believe in is taking them. The truth of God is needed not only for the beginning of conversion, but the truth of God is needed throughout the entirety of our converted life to bring us further and further nearer to the perfection of Jesus Christ.

If we do not continually acknowledge the truth of God as He reveals it to us, then when we get to the grave there is not going to be anything to carry through it that is indicative of a life that is like God's. Another way of putting this would be there is nothing to carry through the grave into the Kingdom of God because the person has not been dealing with reality.