

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

Established 1953

October-December 2011

Vol. 45 / No. 6

REACTIONS TO THE TRUTH

by Lee Moses

Most people do not like it when someone lies to them. We appreciate it when someone is willing to tell us the truth even though it costs that person dearly . . . or do we? The fact is that there are many different reactions to the truth, and not all are positive.

DOWNPLAY THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH

Some people respond to hearing the truth by espousing the notion that truth is not very important. There are several different ways that people downplay the importance of truth.

Some out-and-out *deny that truth exists*. This was Pontius Pilate's modus operandi. He was given the tremendous opportunity to have an interview with Jesus Christ, and to ask Him about matters of eternal importance. Jesus told 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 18:37). Pilate drily responded, “*What is truth?*” (verse 38). Since he denied the existence of truth, it is no wonder that he erroneously felt he could remove his guilt in the death of Christ by simply washing his hands.

The truth-denying spirit of Pilate has truly come into its own in recent years. Young people are being systematically taught in public schools and colleges that there can be no absolutes. A popular movie subtly indoctrinates its viewers that “only a Sith [bad guy, LM] deals in absolutes.” When there are no absolutes, when someone does “*that which [is] right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6; 21:25), he always does that which is right. According to such reasoning, truth, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. It is virtually impossible to reason with those who deny truth exists. One hundred

years ago, there were skeptics known as modernists who opposed the Bible and Christianity. They would seek to disprove the claims of the Bible and Christianity by reason, though their reasoning was flawed. However, by and large the new skeptics do not bother trying to reason whether the Bible and Christianity are true or false. As one writer observed, “The claims of Christianity are not denied; they are rejected because they purport to be true.”

Another way in which some will downplay the importance of truth is to *deny that one can know the truth*. There is a faction of erring brethren who may not go to the extreme of denying truth exists, but they do deny that one can actually **know** he has arrived at the knowledge of truth. They say that we cannot get a firm grasp on truth, because it is always changing. They disparagingly relegate truth to the realm of subjectivism, and call for others to welcome the winds of change. What our erring brethren call “winds of change,” the apostle Paul condemns as being “*tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*” (Ephesians 4:14). Contrary to such aimless drifting, Paul counters, “*But speaking the **truth** in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ*” (verse 15, all emphases LM). If one can speak the truth, one can know the truth. And as Jesus promised, “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32). Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6). To deny that one can know truth is to deny that one can know Christ!

Another means of downplaying the importance of truth is simply *ignoring the truth*. Perhaps the reader has seen the television advertisements featuring the “Aflac duck.” The advertisements feature people wondering aloud what company can provide the insurance services they so desperately need. In response, the duck will quack with increasing volume and intensity, “AFLAC!” However, despite his having (according to the advertisement) the correct answer to their question, no one pays attention to the duck. After all, he is just a duck. Likewise, many ignore the truth when it is told them. Among the church's self-proclaimed “elite,” the change agents, there is a tendency to dismiss those fervently proclaiming the truth with a wave of the hand. Some hear that they need to repent and be baptized so that their sins may be forgiven, and ignore what they hear. Some hear about the coming Judgment Day, and ignore what they hear. Peter wrote, “*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*” (2 Peter 3:3-4). Too many upon hearing the truth, instead of allowing it to “prick their hearts,” allow it to roll right down and off their calloused consciences.

Regardless of how some may try to downplay the importance of truth, they cannot decrease its importance. Truth is crucial to our society's success. How can one who has a disregard for the truth be trusted to tell the truth? How can one who has a disregard for the truth be trusted to live by any moral standard? And how can a society function when no one can be trusted to tell the truth or to conduct themselves according to an objective moral standard? Even more importantly, and far more importantly, truth is the standard by which we will be judged before Christ. Paul warns of “*the day when God shall judge the secrets of*

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication #211780

. . . is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

FCGN is mailed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name we must have a complete address, including number and street name, or R.R. or HCR number, plus box number, or a P.O. Box number and the **NINE DIGIT ZIP CODE**. This paper is supported by voluntary contributions for which we are grateful. Financial information will be furnished upon request. **Mail all address corrections or manuscripts to:**

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

P.O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

Lee MosesEDITOR
Phone(870) 625-3217
E-Mailcocfcgn@centurytel.net
Websitewww.fultoncountygospelnews.org
Brian DixonWebmaster
E-Mailsales@halopages.net

(continued from page one)

men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16). As Christ said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Unfortunately, too many "receiv[e] not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). They instead downplay its immeasurable importance.

SHOOT THE MESSENGER

Other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, perhaps no man in Biblical history is as worthy of commendation and emulation as the apostle Paul. This is because Paul was faithful and truthful. As he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (1 Timothy 2:7). By that truth he preached and taught, he led many from the shackles of sin. Yet consider the adversarial attitude taken toward him, even among some who had been saved by his preaching:

Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? (Galatians 4:13-16).

Others were bringing these Galatian brethren a perverted false "gospel" that was troubling the souls of the Galatians as it caused them to turn away from the Lord (1:6-7). Yet the Galatians did not count these liars their enemies; they considered truthful Paul their enemy.

In his play *Antigone*, Sophocles observed, "No one likes the bearer of bad news." Although the Gospel is most certainly "good news," some perceive it as bad news since it is challenging and demanding. Some will go to great lengths to "suppress the truth" (Romans 1:18, New King James Version). And a common "knee-jerk" reaction to the truth is likewise to suppress the one who tells the truth, blaming the messenger for the message.

Mankind has a long history of shooting the messenger. Jehoiada was a priest in Jerusalem who saved the young infant Joash's life, and provided invaluable counsel once Joash became king of Judah. However, when Jehoiada's son Zechariah provided godly and inspired counsel to King Joash, Joash did not receive it well:

Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of

Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it (2 Chronicles 24:17-22).

Micaiah suffered similar treatment at the hands of King Ahab of Israel. Ahab acknowledged that Micaiah was a true prophet of the LORD, but added, "I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kings 22:8). Then when he did not find Micaiah's Divine message to his liking, Ahab returned Micaiah to his undeserved imprisonment, commanding he be fed "with bread of affliction and with water of affliction" (verses 26-27). Jeremiah was deemed "worthy to die" when he brought a challenging message from God (Jer. 26:11). Cain saw his brother Abel as a living testimony to the truth, so he killed him (1 John 3:12; compare with Hebrews 11:4). Herod Antipas imprisoned and ultimately killed John the immerser because John told Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:18). When Jesus Christ affirmed the truth that He was the Divine Messiah, the Jewish council responded, "He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" (Matthew 26:66-68).

In the modern day United States, the common approach is not literally to kill the messengers of truth. Despisers of truth shoot verbal bullets their way, calling them "confrontational, negative, unloving," and such. The messengers of truth are indeed confrontational, because such is the nature of truth. True Christians who have come out of the darkness of a lie to obey the light of the

truth are to “walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). This means that they will necessarily rebuke the works of darkness (verses 11, 13). This does not sit well with those who would rather continue in the darkness of sin.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God (John 3:19-21).

So yes, messengers of truth **will** be confrontational at times. The messengers of truth will also be *negative* at times, because not all truth is positive (Jeremiah 1:10; Ezekiel 3:17-18; 2 Timothy 4:2).

However, it is false accusation for anyone to attack the messengers of truth as *unloving* merely because what they have to say may be unpleasant: “*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ*” (Ephesians 4:15). Only the truth can be spoken in love. Only the truth can cause one to grow into the likeness of Christ. Nonetheless, some will still attack truth-speakers as unloving. But since the truth is not important to such people, neither do they find it important to make only truthful allegations.

EMBRACE A LIE

One who finds the truth objectionable will often replace the truth with something contradictory to it, and will cling tightly to the false replacement. Of Israel the LORD said, “*That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits*” (Isaiah 30:9-10). In place of the “right things” of the “law of the LORD,” they preferred “smooth things” and “deceits.” Things did not change for the better in subsequent generations: “*A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The*

prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (Jeremiah 5:30-31). Paul warned Timothy, “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

It would not seem to make a bit of sense to embrace a lie, but most people are “*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*” (3:4, American Standard Version). To most, “new and exciting” is easier to embrace than “*the old paths,*” even though only the old paths can provide “*rest for your souls*” (Jer. 6:16). “*And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD*” (9:3). Yet faithful Christians must continue “*in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*” (2 Timothy 2:25).

EMBRACE THE TRUTH

Of the Christians at Thessalonica Paul rejoiced, “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, 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*” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). They heard the truth, realized it was the truth, acknowledged it was the truth, and submitted themselves to the truth. Solomon’s eternally wise counsel is to “*Buy the truth, and sell it not*” (Proverbs 23:23). The psalmist wrote of the blessed man, “*But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night*” (Psalm 1:2). As the psalmist pled to God, “*Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day*” (25:5). These are they who embrace the truth.

What happened to the man who saved a neighboring family from their burning house? Certainly, he was thanked profusely and adored by that family, was he not? Was he not admired

by the rest of the community? So should the truth be adored, admired, and esteemed for the life which it provides in the face of eternal destruction. The truth, the word of God, “sanctifies,” or sets apart, people from the world (John 17:17). And what is going to happen to the world? It is going to be incinerated (2 Peter 3:10; Matthew 13:40-43). The man who saved the family from the fire may have brought news that was unpleasant to hear when he yelled that their house was on fire. He may have challenged them when he told them to crawl to avoid smoke inhalation. But he told them the truth.

“*The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding*” (Proverbs 15:31-32). Of the blessed man who embraced and continually imbibed the truth it is said, “*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*” (Psalm 1:3).

CONCLUSION

Four different categories of reactions to the truth have been considered: (1) Downplay the importance of the truth; (2) “Shoot” the messenger of truth; (3) Embrace a lie; and (4) Embrace the truth. But notice that there is a close relation between the first three reactions: When one has downplayed the importance of truth, this will cause him to reject the messenger of truth, and ultimately will cause him to embrace a lie. It may be the case that one has embraced a lie, which causes one to downplay the importance of truth, and ultimately to come to detest the messenger of truth. Whatever the case, when one responds unfavorably to the truth, all of these three eventually run together. And the one who fails to embrace the truth can only live a lie.

As much as one might think that no one would appreciate being lied to, many people—most people—react negatively to the truth. Those who are Christians have the responsibility of proclaiming the truth regardless of others’ reactions to it. Each person will be judged by his reaction and response to the truth.

THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD

by Jess Whitlock

While in Ardmore, Oklahoma, a sister in Christ related an interesting episode about the late brother J.W. Chism. Many years before, Henry Stetson (related to the Texas hat maker of that name), came into Oklahoma preaching for the Baptists, enjoying great crowds wherever he preached. Some brethren in Ardmore approached Mr. Stetson about having a public discussion. They proposed that he meet with brother J.W. Chism. Mr. Stetson agreed to discuss the Bible plan of salvation in public debate.

The first debate lasted almost a week, and centered on passages like Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Peter 3:21; etc. As the debate drew to a close, Mr. Stetson challenged brother Chism to meet for another debate in another community. Brother Chism picked up the gauntlet. On the third or

fourth day of that second debate, brother Chism had just finished his second affirmative argument. Mr. Stetson walked slowly to the podium. Everybody assumed he would enter his negative speech. However, Mr. Stetson turned and spoke directly to brother Chism. He said that if brother Chism would take his good confession that he was ready to be baptized **for the remission of sins** (Acts 2:38).

Obviously, the debate closed with that act of obedience to the Gospel (Romans 6:1-4, 16-18). Brother Stetson then held a meeting in that very community with almost fifty people being baptized into Christ, and added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41- 47). Brother Stetson continued as a faithful Gospel preacher for years to follow. Let us never underestimate the power of the Word of God (Rom. 1:16). Remember, **when a man who is honestly mistaken hears the Truth, he will either quit being mistaken, or he will quit being honest!**

GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

JULY, AUGUST & SEPTEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

CHURCHES

Elijah church of Christ (Caulfield, MO).....	100.00
Poughkeepsie church of Christ (Poughkeepsie, AR).....	100.00
Viola church of Christ (Viola, AR).....	75.00
East Side church of Christ on the Hill (Lexington, OK).....	90.00
Lowell church of Christ (Springdale, AR).....	120.00
Jeff church of Christ (Thayer, MO)....	75.00
Sturkie church of Christ (Sturkie, AR).....	240.00
Pritchett church of Christ (Big Sandy, TX).....	150.00
Clarkridge church of Christ (Clarkridge, AR).....	225.00
Moody church of Christ (Moody, MO).....	150.00
Agnos church of Christ (Agnos, AR).....	150.00
Pilot church of Christ (Mammoth Spring, AR).....	300.00
Crossroads church of Christ (Gepp, AR).....	200.00
Gospel Hill church of Christ (Pottersville, MO).....	300.00
Camp church of Christ (Camp, AR).....	135.00
Elizabeth church of Christ (Elizabeth, AR).....	75.00

Bakersfield church of Christ (Bakersfield, MO).....	150.00
Moko church of Christ (Sturkie, AR).....	150.00

INDIVIDUALS

Wilene & Luceile (Franklin, AR).....	60.00
Greg & Rebecca McFann (Malaga, WA).....	75.00
Lavada Allen (Bainbridge, GA).....	20.00
Ermyl Pearle (Beedeville, AR).....	100.00
John Smith (Wilson, NC).....	50.00
Norma Krause (Alton, MO).....	20.00
Monteen Cotter (Salem, AR).....	15.00
Ernest & Janette Henderson (Itasca, TX).....	50.00
Evelyn Hulstine (Porterville, CA).....	10.00
Mark & Daphne Diane Ramey (Cheyenne, WY).....	100.00
Fred & Lula Sigwalt (Horseshoe Bend, AR).....	50.00
Jennie Owens (Bono, AR).....	20.00
Ashley & Sara Pendergrass (Caulfield, MO).....	200.00
Anonymous (Broken Arrow, OK).....	50.00
Anonymous (Rogersville, MO).....	1,100
Anonymous (Little Rock, AR).....	25.00
Gary & Ann Wilson (Hot Springs, AR).....	40.00
In memory of Floyd & Opal Mitchell, Poughkeepsie, AR & Noel Wilson, Cave City, AR	

CHURCH OF CHRIST
 P.O. BOX 251
 MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554
 ADDRESS
 SERVICE
 REQUESTED

Periodical Postage
 Paid At
 Mammoth Spring, AR
 72554-9998
 Publication #211780