

*Messengers
For
Christ*

*Outreach Program
Handbook 8*

Valiant for the Truth

I Corinthians 4:7:

For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?

In my over fifty-five years of ministry I have been abundantly blessed to have been associated with the greatest believers. They were men and women who loved the truth and committed their lives to the furtherance of the gospel. With some, I have spent years, with others, just days, but the privilege to stand together with them shoulder to shoulder, contending for the faith, has been an honor and a delight.

To know and work with men and women who were valiant for the truth brought life into focus and challenged me to develop a love for the truth. Their example of being fervent in the spirit has profoundly affected me. Their resolute dedication continues to spur me on to seek out the truth whatever the cost.

There is nothing I have or know which I did not receive. I am so thankful for what I have been taught and the teachers who have not only taught me but modeled for me the truth they communicated. I have always had beliefs which guided my life. However, when I learned that just because I believed something did not make it true and that truth was not relative but absolute my life changed so much for the better. When the quest for truth replaced my pursuit of personal preferences and parochial prejudices my life took on greater meaning and certainty.

I think most people, see *truth* as opposed to *lies* and *true* as opposed to *false* and rightly so. We will spend much time investigating both truth and lies. However, early in my college days, I read Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Intellect*. In it, he juxtaposed truth with repose. That insight has served me well for it has taught me that if one wants truth it is going to take work. Emerson wrote:

God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please, — you can never have both. Between these, as a pendulum, man oscillates. He in whom the love of repose predominates will accept the first creed, the first philosophy, the first political party he meets, — most likely his father's. He gets rest, commodity, and reputation; but he shuts the door of truth. He in whom the love of truth predominates will keep himself aloof from all moorings, and afloat. He will abstain from dogmatism, and recognize all the opposite negations, between which, as walls, his being is swung. He submits to the inconvenience of suspense and imperfect opinion, but he is a candidate for truth, as the other is not, and respects the highest law of his being.

II Timothy 2:15 exhorts us to be workmen. To rightly divide the scripture requires work. Although God laid out the principles by which it may be done, we still have to follow through and apply the research principles to get the result we desire. Work requires time and effort. We must be willing to invest both if we want to enjoy the promised harvest.

Jesus challenged his disciples to continue in the truth he had taught them for doing so would make them free, free indeed. I dedicate this *Messengers For Christ* adventure to all those valiant for the truth who have blessed me and added so much to my life. At the top of the list is my wonderful wife, Ferne, who has stood by me through the best and worst of times. Her devotion to the truth and commitment to our marriage has made all the difference in the world.

Affirmations: I am a workman of the Word. I am so thankful for the truth I know.

Recommended Reading: Day 1: Romans 1 & 2; Day 51: II Timothy 2.

John 8:32:

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

When Jethro advised Moses regarding what to do in order to provide better service and oversight to God's people, he required that Moses get help from, "able men, such as fear God, men of **truth**" (Exodus 18:21). Before Joshua departed, he charged God's people to "fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in **truth**" (Joshua 24:14). After the people admitted sin in asking for a king, they asked Samuel to continue to pray for them. Samuel said he would continue to pray and teach them the right way on a condition: that they would "fear the LORD, and serve him in **truth** with all their heart" (I Samuel 12:24). The condition upon which God promised David that his progeny would always sit upon the throne was that his children would, "take heed to their way, to walk before Him in **truth** with all their heart and with all their soul" (I Kings 2:4).

Truth is important to God. He calls Himself a God of truth (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 31:5; Isaiah 65:16). Indeed, He wants men and women of truth who walk in truth (I Kings. 2:4; 3:6; Psalms 26:3; 86:11; Isaiah 38:3; II John 4; III John. 3 & 4). Indeed, God desires truth in the inward parts (Psalms 51:6) for it is through the truth that believers are sanctified (John 17:17), and it is for refusing to receive the "love of the truth" that men perish (II Thessalonians 2.10).

Therefore, one would hope that all Christians would be valiant for the truth. Yet it seems that every age must lament the lack of mighty men who will "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). We are called to live the truth and wield the sword of the spirit, the Word of God, because "we wrestle not against flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6:12, 17).

Being valiant for the truth does not mean to indulge in frivolous controversies about trifles. We are not to "strive not about words to no profit" (II Timothy 2:14) or to dote "about questions and strifes of words" (I Timothy 6:4). It does require that one "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). Just as the rightly dividing of the scripture is not complete until it is lived out. So too, being valiant for the truth occurs in the crucible of our day-by-day existence. Being valiant for the truth also requires that "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (II Timothy 2:24,25).

Of course, when we think about the truth, we must recognize that we find it in both the rightly-divided Word of God and in the person of His only begotten son, our lord and savior Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. One cannot be valiant for one without being valiant for the other. Both knowing and continuing in the Word make one free (John 8:31, 32). The freedom Jesus spoke of is real, for he promised to make us free indeed (John 8:36)!

Knowing the truth is an experiential reality obtained through effort. It is not simply a head-knowledge; rather it is an experiential understanding gained through doing what God's Word says. As we live the truth we prove it. Until we do, it is not a reality for us. God challenges us to prove all things and hold fast the good (I Thessalonians 5:21). People will never understand the law of giving and receiving until they take God's challenge and prove Him with it (Malachi 3:10).

Because I have tried my very best to prove all things I was taught from God's Word, I find that I have become very slow to change what I believe regarding it. Most of the time, I refine what I believe rather than a reverse it. There have been times, however, when reversing what I believe has been necessary, and then I gladly do so.

We are valiant for the truth we know and extremely grateful to be able to continue to learn more of it. Our humility to God allows us to grow and serve as we yoke ourselves to him who identified himself as "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). We know we do not have all the answers, and take great solace in that we know Him Who does. It is because He has made Himself known unto us that we so vigorously declare Him to the world.

Affirmations: I know I don't know it all and am thankful to keep learning. Truth brings me certainty.

Recommended Reading: Day 2: Exodus 18 & Joshua 24; Day 52: I Samuel 12 & I Kings 2.

Philippians 2:3-4:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

In religious circles, we sometimes find people who are judgmental, condescending and contentious. Smug know-it-all attitudes and elitist thinking does not correlate with being valiant for the truth. Jesus was certainly valiant for the truth. When he invited us to learn of him, he described himself as “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). God also encouraged us in Ephesians 4:1b-2a “to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness, meekness and longsuffering.”

Lowliness, meekness, and longsuffering are attitudes necessary to cultivate in order to walk worthy, but we must not only think right; we must follow through with action. Unless we forbear one another in love and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we will never walk worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1).

Many times, we miss opportunities because we don’t prepare ourselves for them. We prepare ourselves in many ways. Two of the best ways are by prayer and proper attitude maintenance. Prayer allows us to bring into our relationship with God vital things on our hearts, and maintaining proper attitudes predispose us toward action that we have predetermined to take. I’d like to combine these two options and prayerfully present to God my desire to maintain a proper attitude. That’s an important part of my prayer life, “God help me to be lowly and meek. Help me to be long-suffering with people.” Not only am I putting that attitude in my mind, I’m going to God, presenting to Him my desire and asking for His help with it.

An attitude is a predisposition to act. It is not an action, but it is a mindset that leads to or directs us to act in certain ways. It is important to keep our attitudes right because it provides a necessary head-start. When our attitudes are right, as situations or opportunities present themselves, we roll right into it.

Let me give you an example using a basketball. What is a basketball predisposed to do. I’ll give you a clue. It’s round. Well, it’s predisposed to roll. If you place it on a surface that is not flat, what’s it going to do? Right, it’s going to roll. If you place it on a flat surface it will remain motionless, but if I give it the slightest little push, what’s going to happen? It’s going to roll. Why? Because it’s round; it’s predisposed to roll. My Bible is flat. It’s not predisposed to roll. It will move if I push it, but as soon as I stop pushing, what happens? It stops; it stays still.

That’s what the proper attitudes do. They predispose us to take the proper action. When our attitudes are right, we move into action without much impetus. It doesn’t take much of a push to get a basketball to roll. Neither does it take much of a stimulus for us to act when our attitudes are right. When we are lowly, meek, and long-suffering we are predisposed to walk worthy. The preposition “with” is the Greek word *meta* both times it occurs in Ephesians 4:2. This shows us that these attitudes of lowliness, meekness and longsuffering should accompany the worthy walk of a believer. Forbearing one another in love and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace are action steps that take us further on our way to walking worthy.

As Philippians 2:3-4 above warns us, selfishness may raise its head in strife and vainglory. “Strife” refers to a desire to put one’s self forward. It’s a partisan and fractious attitude that promotes self-interest. Vainglory means empty boasting. It’s an attempt to vaunt oneself. It’s not only associated with extreme pride and boastfulness, but also excessive and ostentatious vanity. Paul challenges us to let **nothing** be done through strife or vainglory. Not one thing—we should not allow ourselves ever to act out of strife or vainglory. What do we do instead? In lowliness of mind, we esteem others better than ourselves. That’s genuine humility. “Better” means “superior” or “more important.” Servants who serve out of love esteem those they serve highly. We reckon them worthy of the service.

Although we are sons of God, we, like Jesus, take on the form of a servant and serve. He came not to be ministered unto but to minister. We follow his lead in this regard. Being convinced of our sonship is what allows us to engage in service. Knowing whose we are and whom we serve is as important to us as it was to Paul (Acts 27:23). We take our direction from God. He directs us into these ministering situations. We voluntarily and genuinely esteem others worthy of being served. We treat them with honor and respect and promote their best interests. We remain thankful to God for opportunities to serve. Pleasing Him should always be our priority.

It does not say that others are better than those who serve them. It says we esteem them that way. We do not see ourselves as inferior; we are sons of God with all power. We simply esteem others to be more important than we are while we serve them. All God’s family has the same rank and privilege. When it’s our opportunity to serve, we do it knowing full well that those we are serving deserve our best effort, for we are not just serving them, we are serving God in the process. Paul knew he was not one bit behind the chiefest of the apostles, but he still chose to serve (II Corinthians 11:5; 12:11). He knew that he was not inferior to anyone, but he still esteemed others as superior to himself. That is just the simple heart of a servant. In serving people we serve the Lord.

Affirmations: I champion the truth. I put away lying and speak the truth.

Recommended Reading: Day 3: Philippians 1 & 2; Day 53: II Corinthians 11 & 12.

I Timothy 3:2–3: A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;³ Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

Of the full list of fifteen qualifications for a bishop, there are just five stated in the negative. One of these is “not a brawler.” Others translations say “not quarrelsome” (CSB, ESV, MGI & NIV) or “not contentious” (ASV, ERV, MRD & NET). Darby’s translation from the 1800’s is “not addicted to contention.” However, I appreciate the KJV rendering of “not a brawler.”

What a mind picture *brawler* generates. I think of a hooligan, a ruffian, a bully, a hellion or a troublemaker. The goal of being valiant for the truth is not self-promotion or causing division. Being valiant for the truth requires having enough self-control to avoid needless controversy and enough courage to move gently and steadily toward confrontation when necessary. It necessitates contending for the faith (Jude 3) without being contentious. We need not go around deliberately picking fights, but know when, how and why to say the needful and oftentimes hard word.

It is important to distinguish between the physical or verbal nature of combat. The physical already has been covered “no striker” (KJV) “not violent but gentle” (ESV) “not swift to strike with his hand” (MGI) and “not a fist fighter” (BER). What’s left is the temperamental and especially verbal nature of the assault.

The flip side of the negative “not a brawler” is the positive “peaceable.” We all should want “to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (I Timothy 2:2). If possible, we should live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18). This may take the peaceable wisdom from above (James 3:17). Those valiant for the truth desire to be peacemakers, not pugilists. They want to “forbear one another in love and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” so they may walk worthy of their calling (Ephesians 4:1-3). Being valiant for the truth desires the preserving and enjoying of this bond of peace, knowing that making peace necessitates confrontation and restoration. Some controversies cannot be avoided, and we engage not because we want to fight. Rather we want to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Therefore, we rise above the allure of petty disputes, and to press valiantly for peace within the body of Christ.

“Brawler,” *amachos*, comes from the root, *machomai*, and is translated “be quarrelsome” later in Timothy where it is identified with four positive qualities.

II Timothy 2:24–26:

The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Not quarrelsome but kind to everyone: The presence of conflict or contention doesn’t excuse a lack of kindness. Even confrontation should be done with kindness. *Not quarrelsome but able to teach:* repeated from I Timothy 3:2, skillfulness in teaching allows the one valiant for the truth to provide sober-minded clarity from God’s word and avoid the strife, *machē*, mentioned in the previous verse. *Not quarrelsome but patiently enduring evil:* Rarely are serious conflicts resolved as quickly as we would like. The one valiant for the truth should lead the way with patience carrying the process through to completion, one step at a time. *Not quarrelsome but correcting his opponents with gentleness or meekness:* The goal is restoration in a spirit of gentleness or meekness (Galatians 6:1).

Let’s find the balance so that we may avoid foolish controversies and move wisely toward resolving genuine conflicts. The one valiant for the truth can be unafraid of disagreements and contend earnestly to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Affirmations: I am not a brawler. I restore with a spirit of meekness.

Recommended Reading: Day 4: II Timothy 3 & 4; Day 54: Romans 12 & James 3.

Ephesians 4:2-3:

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; ³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Lowliness is never forgetting what God has done for you. It's an attitude of humility and modesty. Jesus is the greatest example of this (Matthew 11:29). Paul also modeled this lowliness as he served the Lord (Acts 20:19).

In Philippians 2:3 we are instructed to “*Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” Now, that doesn’t say that others are better than we are. It simply says that we should have the lowliness of mind to esteem them that way. This attitude of lowliness is an important starting point in our interactions with others, and it will open doors of service to us. If everyone in the One Body had this attitude all the time, we would save so much time and effort usually spent on quarrelling and petty bickering.

In Philippians 2:3 lowliness of mind is set in contrast to strife and vainglory. Strife is from the Greek word meaning partisanship or fractiousness. It shows a desire to put one’s self forward and denotes a self-seeking pursuit of office by unfair means. It is also known as playing politics or being selfishly self-promoting. It panders to intrigue, ambition, and unbridled rivalry, and it is motivated by the gain of power and prestige. Lowliness is incompatible with both strife and vainglory, and is a strong deterrent to them.

Galatians 5:26: Let us not be [become, *ginomai*] desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Here we have three attitudes to avoid. This terrible trio produces nothing but trouble and should set off alarms in our heads and hearts. When we are “desirous of vain glory” we have an egotistic mindset that wants, not just attention or recognition, but glory, praise and honor, too. People, who are this way, are proud, conceited, and oft times, boastful. Sometimes it’s cloaked with humor, but that doesn’t change its nature. The Greek word, *kenodoxos*, that is translated “desirous of vain glory” means *glorying without reason* or *eager for empty glory*. “Glory” is associated with the mystery throughout the scriptures, but “vain glory” is not. It’s a counterfeit.

We are not to have a superior attitude toward our brethren. We do not patronize or condescend or look down upon them. This egotistical attitude that puffs oneself up is vain indeed. We do not walk to bring glory to ourselves, but so that God gets the glory. We just need to stay lowly and meek. Nothing encourages results better than walking with lowliness and meekness to God and His Word.

Next it says, “provoking one another.” “Provoking” means “to call out or to challenge to a combat or contest.” Vaunting oneself can cause conflicts, but we are not to antagonize or pick fights with or irritate one another. When people do not get the glory or recognition they think they deserve, they are often ready to fight about it. Ambitious rivalry instigates ungodly attitudes of dislike, aversion, and egotism. Egotism can push people to do the most obnoxious things (like trying to run everyone’s life). If we’re honest enough, we recognize we have enough trouble running our own lives. Trying to prove oneself better than someone else has no place in a loving household. Competition can be healthy and a lot of fun, but it can easily become divisive and self-serving. Competition is always the best when we see ourselves as teammates in a contest against our adversary the devil, not each other.

The last part of this tragic trio of attitudes to avoid from Galatians 5 is “envying one another.” Envy is to experience a feeling of ill will due to real or presumed advantage experienced by someone else. It may also cause one to hold a grudge. People desirous of personal glory are commonly envious of others’ success. Instead of rejoicing in the victories of others, envy causes one to feel ill will toward those who succeed. That’s contrary to the mystery. That’s contrary to the one body.

We do not compete with one another. We do not compete with each other for God’s grace and mercy. We are to work together as members of One Body fitly framed together. When we function as one body, each doing our part, then signs miracles and wonders become commonplace. God’s supply is unlimited. He has enough to go around and then some.

Some people have such a limited view of God. They think that God has only so much mercy and if you get it, I’m out of luck. He’s got ten measures of mercy and if He gives it to the ten people then I’m out of luck. No!!! God has riches of glory. He’s got enough to meet every need and do it again, and do it again and keep doing it again and again and again. Because you get God’s grace and mercy doesn’t mean I don’t. He does not run out, He’s got riches! The supply isn’t limited. As a matter of fact, you getting it should bless and encourage me. The example we see of some one else receiving should build our expectation to receive also. “WOW! God’s in a giving mood, okay don’t forget me Lord!” Seeing others get it should build my expectation to get it, too. That’s a much better way to look at it.

Affirmations: With lowliness, meekness and longsuffering, I forbearing my brethren in love. I Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Recommended Reading: Day 5: Galatians 6; Day 55: Numbers 16.

Proverbs 22:21:

That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Jeremiah bemoans the situation in which he finds himself. He is often referred to as the weeping prophet (to which Jeremiah 9:1 attests) because Israel was not doing well and their failures frequently moved the prophet to tears. The lack of commitment and dedication of God's people to the truth hurt Jeremiah deeply.

Jeremiah 9:1-3:

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! ² Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they *be* all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. ³ 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.

Jeremiah was writing this by revelation. How terrible things must have been for him to want to respond with tears night and day. God told him to speak these words. Verses two and three tell us why. They were all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men who bent their tongues for lies just like they were shooting arrows. Instead of arrows it was big whopping lies! God had given them truth, but they forsook it for lies.

They misrepresented God's heart. They did not share His compassion, His love. It was just lies; it was all about them and what they wanted. It was not about God and what He wanted. They were not valiant for the truth.

I am so honored to work and be associated with people who are valiant for the truth. People for whom truth makes a difference. Without truth where are we going? What can we base our lives on? What kind of foundation are we ever going to have? Are we ever going to think clearly without knowledge of the truth? God is so gracious to make it known to us.

Jeremiah 9:4-6:

Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. ⁵ And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary themselves to commit iniquity. ⁶ Thine habitation *is* in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

It would be terrible to live in a time like that, when you could not trust anybody. They taught themselves to speak lies. Everyone deceived their neighbors. Lies produce, deceit. That is why lies are used, to deceive. Deceit and lies are standard operating procedure for the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4).

You may be familiar with the joke that has become a modern-day proverb: *How can you tell a politician is lying? His lips are moving.* Our culture is based on lies. It has learned to accept lies. It has learned to accept deceit. It refuses to accept the truth.

I refused to let my kids watch the Bill Cosby show. It was so funny, but the whole family lied to each other all the time. They just lied and thought it was funny! The whole family thought it was funny. So after the first few times of rolling on the floor laughing I thought, "What is this putting in my mind and my heart? What is this teaching my kids? Go ahead and lie to mom and dad but make it funny."

When we moved to South Carolina, my wife and I had an eye-opening cultural experience. We would invite people to come to our home for a bible fellowship and everyone sweetly agreed to come. "We'll come!" they would say with a big smile. But, they would not show up. We soon learned they never had any intention to come in the first place. In that culture, it was not considered a lie, it was being "polite." Rather than offend us by declining to our faces, the Southern culture dictated it was more polite to lie.

We have to bring integrity back to our culture. We have to mean what we say. We have to champion the truth. We have to put away lies and deceit and just "speak the truth every man with his neighbor" (Ephesians 4:25).

Affirmations: Truth brings certainty and stability to my life. I have integrity and expect it from my brethren.

Recommended Reading: Day 6: Jeremiah 9; Day 56: Proverbs 22.

Ephesians 4:14-15: That we *henceforth* be no more children, 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;¹⁵ But speaking the truth [*alētheuō*] in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

Ephesians is considered by many to be the pinnacle of Paul's revelation in the Church Epistles. Even though Ephesians is the apex of everything God had written in His Word, He still has to tell His people to not lie. We are a household, and we do not conform ourselves to cultural practices that promote deceit. We do not live the way the rest of the world does. We speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:25).

The Greek word in Ephesians 4:15 translated "speaking the truth" is *alētheuō*. Friberg says it means "to tell the truth," "be truthful," "speak what is true about God," or to "be faithful to the truth." It is the verb form of the noun *alēthēs*, truth. In English we do not have a verb form of truth of which I am aware. Perhaps "to truth it" might communicate. Darby translates it "doing the truth," and the revised version adds a center reference of "deal truly." The New American version says "living the truth." The New English Translation says, "practicing the truth."

I like Friberg's definition of "to be faithful to the truth." The point is that it is not just, "speaking the truth in love." We ought to see truth as a quality of action as well as of speech. Paul wants us to live the truth as well as to speak it. Real spiritual growth is only possible by a way of life that conforms to the truths in word and deed.

Because of our esteem for the truth of God we do our best to be faithful to it by doing whatever it says to the best of our ability. That is when we will grow. Without the truth we will never grow or mature. Walking in the truth is the evidence of its presence in our lives. We know it, and we do what it says. Part of Jeremiah's indictment of his countrymen was that they would not speak the truth. God gave Jeremiah a message to speak and his countrymen hated him for it. They treated him with disdain and contempt. The only other occurrence of *alētheuō* is in Galatians 4:16, where Paul asks a question that Jeremiah must have also wondered about.

Galatians 4:16: Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth [*alētheuō*]?

Our faithfulness to the Word should never make us an enemy to someone who also loves the truth. Paul knew that should not be. If we are indicted, let it be for speaking the truth (like Paul) rather than not speaking it (like Jeremiah's countrymen).

Jeremiah's countrymen "taught their tongue to speak lies." Romans 1:25 similarly speaks of people who "changed the truth of God into a lie." When truth is rejected it is always replaced with lies. The Greek word for lie or falsehood is *pseudos*. It occurs nine times in the Greek New Testament. Its first occurrence is very enlightening and establishes the source for all falsehood. Jesus, speaking to the Pharisees who were born of the devil, said:

John 8:44:

Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie [*pseudos*], he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar [*pseudēs*], and the father of it.

The devil fosters and promotes lies to deceive people and separate them from God and His truth. That is why Ephesians 4:25 tells us to speak the truth with our neighbor by "putting away lying." John, in his first epistle, assures us that no lie comes from the truth (I John 2:21, 27). The devil consistently uses lies to deceive and mislead. Thessalonians warns us:

II Thessalonians 2:8-12:

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:⁹ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying [*pseudos*] wonders,¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.¹¹ And for this cause God shall send [idiom of permission - allow to be sent] them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie [*pseudos*]:¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Those that work these lying signs and wonders fool those who lack a love of the truth. Revelation speaks of those kept from entering the city of God. Some of them are identified as "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Revelation 22:15). Lies are a main weapon in the devil's arsenal, and he uses them effectively. We would do well to beware.

Affirmations: I speak the truth in love. I receive the love of the truth that I might be saved.

Recommended Reading: Day 7: John 8; Day 57: II Thessalonians 2.

Matthew 5:11-12:

Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely [*pseudomai*], for my sake.¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

The verb form of *pseudos*, *pseudomai*, has two basic meanings, *to lie or make a false statement* and *to deceive with lies*. The first has to do with what one does, and the second deals with one's intent in doing so. *Pseudomai* occurs twelve times in the Greek New Testament. The first is in Matthew 5:11, noted above. In it, Jesus comforted his followers who were persecuted for their association with him. They had to endure the evil spoken against them falsely, but they would be rewarded for it. So will Jeremiah who certainly qualified as one of those prophets who endured it before them. We who are valiant for the truth will rejoice and be exceeding glad for our reward in heaven will be great also.

Acts 5:3-4:

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie [*pseudomai*] to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?⁴ Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied [*pseudomai*] unto men, but unto God.

This account shows both the lie and the attempt to deceive with it. Ananias and Sapphira intended to deceive Peter and lied about the price of the land they sold. They intended to gain favor by giving, and thought that if they said they gave the total price they received from the sale the favor would be greater. However, Peter was not deceived. They had conceived an elaborate scenario in their minds to misrepresent the truth. Peter was not fooled, and they paid dearly for their treachery.

The next few occurrences concern Paul and the operation of his ministry. Paul was adamant about telling the truth.

Romans 9:1:

I say the truth in Christ, I lie [*pseudomai*] not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

Paul said it both in the positive and in the negative so we would not miss his point. Paul told the truth. Therefore, his conscience was free and right with God. Remember, Paul spoke this by revelation. God wanted it said and had Paul state it bluntly.

In II Corinthians 11 at the end of one of his apologetics Paul says:

II Corinthians 11:31:

The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for evermore knoweth that I lie [*pseudomai*] not.

They were accusing Paul of lying, of being deceitful, of ministering for the money. Although there were many lies spoken against him, he just spoke the truth and rested in the truth that God knew he did not lie. He had God as his witness.

Galatians 1:20:

Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie [*pseudomai*] not.

He spoke the truth. He spoke the truth before God, like giving testimony and putting your hand on the Bible. Before God I lie not. God knows I do not lie.

Colossians 3:8-9:

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

⁹ Lie [*pseudomai*] not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

Paul also specifically commanded the believers to “lie not.” Do not lie to one another.

I Timothy 2:7:

Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie [*pseudomai*] not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

Again, he says it in both the positive and the negative.

Hebrews 6:18 says it is “impossible for God to lie.” Titus 1:2 also tells us that “God cannot lie.” Our God is a God of truth without iniquity. When it comes to His Word we can trust it. It is impossible for God to lie. He would never lie, deceive, or misrepresent Himself or anybody else. It is impossible for Him to lie. He is a God of truth. Deuteronomy 32:4: says, “*He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is he.*”

James 3:14-15:

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie [*pseudomai*] not against the truth.¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

When we have bitter envying and strife in our hearts we are misrepresenting the truth. We are lying against the truth and essentially saying this is the way life ought to be led. But it is not our walk and our doctrine that have to be right. It has to be in sync. It has to be the same. *Truthing it* requires that what we speak is also the standard of life by which we live.

The mystery is not just words; it is not just a doctrine; it is not just information to stick in our heads. The mystery is to be lived. There is a practical side and if we do not live it we do not really know it! It takes living it to know it! If we do not live it we will not understand it. God commands us not to only have that information in our heads, but it is to make a difference in our lives. The truth is to guide our steps.

We treat each other with respect and honor. We treat each other as we would our lord, Jesus Christ. We recognize the Christ in each other. That is the truth! If we do not recognize that and we do not treat each other with respect, love, and compassion then we are not living the truth, we are lying like it said in James 3. We must live it. Of course, we will make mistakes. But we are learning more, and we get better all the time. We do not relentlessly condemn ourselves for mistakes. Rather, our goal is to do what the Word says, to be valiant for the truth, to live that way.

I John 1:6:

If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie [*pseudomai*], and do not the truth:

Why do you think God had this written? He had it written because we needed to know it. We needed to know it because people walking in darkness will say they are in fellowship with God. One of the great themes of I John is fellowship. Another is honesty.

I John 1:8-10:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

We have to be honest. If we say one thing, and do another, it is wrong. If we are not honest we cannot walk in fellowship. We have to be honest and admit we are wrong when we are off the mark, so we can get back on. God will help us with that. He is not going to be accusing, pointing fingers at us. He is not going to turn away and put His nose up. He is going to help us; He will point it out if we are meek enough to receive it. He is going to help us learn what we need to learn.

The last occurrence of *pseudomai* is in Revelation 3:9. It notes people who say they are Jews (God’s people) but they lie. It does not matter what people say, if it is contrary to the truth, it is a lie usually spoken to deceive. It is important that we do not allow Satan to deceive us. Indeed, we are commanded to be not deceived (Matthew 24:4; Luke 21:8; I Corinthians 15:33; Galatians 6:7; Ephesians 5:6; II Thessalonians 2:3). So don’t let it happen.

Affirmations: I speak the truth, and I do not lie. I am not deceived by Satan’s devices.

Recommended Reading: Day 8: I John 1; Day 58: James 3.

II Timothy 2:15:

Study [earnestly, diligently, using one's time wisely] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The selection of that term “word of truth” is not accidental or coincidental. It is only used five times in the Bible (Psalms 119:43, II Corinthians 6:7, Ephesians 1:13, II Timothy 2:15 and James 1:18). It points purposely at truth and not falsehoods and lies. II Timothy is written against the background of the church in ruin. In I Timothy the church was moving up, rising, prevailing. By the time Paul wrote II Timothy things were beginning to fall apart, people had forsaken the mystery. It was written to Timothy when the church was, for the most part, forsaking the truth and running after error; it was on the way down.

II Timothy 2:15 is set against a backdrop of false teachers. In verse 14 Paul tells Timothy to avoid word battles that only ruin the listeners. In verses 16-18 he talks about false teachers that had said the resurrection of the believers had already happened and their godless chatter was eating away at their audience like gangrene. Without rightly dividing the scriptures we will not be able to protect ourselves, let alone others, from erring concerning the truth. Paul says in verse 18 that Hymenaeus and Philetus erred concerning the truth. But even with all of this Paul still says, “Nevertheless the foundation of God is sure.” The deposit that Paul delivered to Timothy, Timothy is supposed to deliver to other faithful men. By God’s mercy and grace it has been delivered to us, and it is our joy to keep that deposit and pass it on.

II Timothy 2:14: Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the subverting of the hearers.

“Charging them before the Lord” is quite an emphatic or forceful way of saying it that shows what a big deal it was. People want to argue about things. They want to advance their causes. When confronted with what the Word says they say, “Yeah but...”

II Timothy 2:15-16: Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.¹⁶ But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

People go on and on about the most useless things. We speak God’s Word, but all they want to do is babble on about the most profane and ungodly things. In Matthew 7:16 Jesus says “by their fruits you shall know them.” That is how we are known, by our fruit. That is how I know the people that I work with are valiant for the truth because the fruit in their lives declare it.

II Timothy 2:17: And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

It says “their word” not “God’s word.” Their word ate like canker. Yet, they tried to pass it off as God’s Word. Paul warned that the word of Hymenaeus or Philetus would eat like a canker, a gangrene. That does not mean much to me. I do not know Hymenaeus or Philetus. These were people they knew and with whom they associated. What if it was said of people whom we know? Do you think the impact would be multiplied?

II Timothy 2:18: Who concerning the truth have erred [NIV translates that phrase, “Who have wandered away from the truth...”], saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

Nobody wants to make a mistake when it comes to rightly dividing the Word but we can wander away from it, we can go off on tangents. We follow this thing and that thing and we go after this and that. All of a sudden we are like a sheep that is lost! We had no intention of getting lost. A sheep does not go out and say, “Well today I am going to go out and get lost.” It just starts eating and sees more grass over there, and they just follow the food. It is like the devil putting crumbs along the way, enticing us to *come this way*.

It is like the lady who had a skunk in her basement who called the radio show for help. The radio announcer said, “Oh that is easy.” Just put bread crumbs going up the basement stairs and out to the porch then down the stairs.” So the next day she calls the show back saying, “Now I have two skunks in my basement.”

That is how it happens. People just go after the crumbs. They just start eating then all of a sudden they are lost. They often do not even realize it. Nor do they remember how they got there.

II Timothy 2:19: Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.

And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Paul and the other apostles set this sure foundation before God’s people, and it behooves us to cleave unto it. We know we are on the right track when we have departed from iniquity. We know we are His and our lives are more godly, more holy. We see the result. We do not get angry like we used to. We do not go off and get drunk every weekend. We do not fall into all the old man habit patterns that we used to have because we have learned to put them away. So, let every one that nameth the name of Jesus Christ depart from iniquity.

We cannot let our allegiance to truth deteriorate. The Word calls these misrepresentations of the truth cankers. These cankers progressively undermine one’s belief in the uniqueness and authority of the Bible. How would you like to believe that the gathering together had already happened and you missed it? No thanks! God guarantees me I am out of here when it happens. Praise the Lord.

Affirmations: I am an unashamed workman. I depart from iniquity.

Recommended Reading: Day 9: II Timothy 2; Day 59: Jude.

Ephesians 5:6a: Let no man deceive you with vain words. . . .

Colossians 2:4: And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

The scriptures set the Word of Truth in opposition to that which is false. The immediate context gives examples pulled from the lives of Paul and Timothy. These examples were very real to them. They knew those men; they lived through those situations. They had an experiential knowledge of scriptures like Ephesians 5:6 which says “Let no man deceive you with vain words.” and Colossians 2:4 in which Paul says, “This I say lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.”

These scriptures were real and applied directly to what was happening to them. People were trying to beguile them with enticing words. They saw the effect on people who were deceived and beguiled with enticing words. The first century church did not make it much more than a generation before they lost the truth of the mystery, and that is scary to me. It is scary, and it would be even scarier if I did not know how big God is. Were it not for how magnificent God is, I would say we were doomed to fail. However, God is able.

Even during Paul’s lifetime people forsook the truth of the gospel and turned unto fables. That does not need to happen to us. Even if everyone historically has blown it, we do not need to. We can be among those who do not blow it! We can be among those who do not forsake the mystery. We can be among those to stay put on the doctrine and are not beguiled. We do not need to follow the devil’s bread crumbs. If we are dining on the whole loaf of truth we will not be tempted to follow after the crumbs.

We stay put on the Word because it is the only thing that has ever made a difference in anybody’s life... at least in my life. I have loved God since I can remember, since I was a child. I prayed every night, I said my “now I lay me’s,” I prayed for my entire extended family. I have done that ever since I can remember. But it was not until I had the truth that I had a solid rock in my life so I could stand and say, “That’s it! I’m not moving. This is the true God, and devil you’ve got to get out of here.”

It makes a difference! I can help people! I can ask somebody, “Would you like to get born again? Would you like to have eternal life? Well, I can help you with that.” Then after I share Romans 10:9-10 and lead them into speaking in tongues I can say, “You’ve got the proof now.”

Aren’t you glad you have truth you do not have to yield on? Truth that works! When we minister healing and deliverance to people, they know it is real because it happens! It is the truth of God’s Word, and it changes things! We do not have to retreat from any of God’s promises. Do not follow the crumbs the devil leaves to try to get us off on tangents. We, and everyone else who believes the truth, are the focus of his major attacks. But he does not have his way with us.

Why rightly divide the truth? Because we are in danger of doing what the first century church did — forsaking the truth. “Oh,” you may be saying to yourself, “I’ve heard that before.” That statement sets off a warning alarm in my mind. That is the first bread crumb. “Oh, I’ve heard that before, I do not want to hear that again. Teach me something different, new! I have itching ears! I want to hear something unique!” Well, there is plenty of unique stuff. A lot of the unique material comes in our application of the truth and the testimony in our lives and in the lives of our people. You hear deliverance stories where folks say, “I’ve never heard it on that wise before.” God tells you to do something really weird and when you do it something happens. Like “March around Jerusalem seven times and blow trumpets.”

I remember one of the first times I sat with a lady for deliverance. She had some spirits, and she wanted relief from them. God said, “Ask her about getting this mind picture.” When we go to the Father for help in ministering, we need to do whatever God tells us to do. So I said to the lady, “Okay, now what I would like you to do is get a picture of your mind like from a text book. You’ve seen brains where it looks like spaghetti in a bowl. Just get a picture in your mind.” She says, “Okay, I’ve got it.” I say “What do you see about it?” “Well, it’s like you said, spaghetti in bowl.” I say, “Is there anything unique?” She says, “There’s these black bumps in it, it has black spots.” I say, “Okay, those are spirits, and we are going to get rid of them.” So, we proceed through it and get rid of them. I say, “Okay, now get the picture in your mind and what do you see now?” She says, “Oh! It’s all pink and clear.” “Great, then we are all finished here.” We knew what they were and we took the spirits out and she was delivered.

Guess what I did the next time I ministered to somebody? “Okay, get a picture in your mind of your brain. What do you see?” “I don’t know.” It did not work! “Well do you see anything? Do you see any colors?” “No.” Why would a technique work for one ministering situation and not for another? The old revelation was not for the new situation. It was for the one before. So, what was I learning? Each person is unique, and God has an infinite number of solutions. You need to believe God each time. Some people receive visual insight and others do not. I had to quiet myself down and go to the Father with meekness on behalf of this new, precious child of God who had come to me expecting deliverance. That is how we learn. When we make mistakes, we do not give up. We go to our heavenly Father with humility and then do whatever it takes to get it right.

If we want to stay out of the same trap that caused the first century believers to forsake the truth and lose the mystery, we are going to need to be valiant for the truth. We will need to champion the gospel of Jesus Christ concerning the mystery without wavering. Our God is almighty; He can keep us safe and secure. Let us respond by being valiant for the truth and let God direct us as He sees fit.

Affirmations: I am not deceived by vain words. I am not enticed with beguiling words.

Recommended Reading: Day 10: Ephesians 5; Day 60: Colossians 2.

II Corinthians 4:1:

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

We know that there are only really two sources for everything there is. Truth comes from God and lies come from the devil. However, people are the ones who decide which one they will follow. The Word sets wonderful standards for doctrine and practice for those of us who want to be good ministers of Jesus Christ. If we adhere to the truth and walk in it, we will have the liberty God desires for us to serve His people the Bread of Life.

It is through God's mercy that we have any ministry at all. The only reason we can serve people is because God was merciful to us. Paul certainly realized this. He knew it was by God's mercy that he was able to serve in ministry and he was thankful.

I Timothy 1:12-16:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; ¹³ Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This *is* a faithful saying, [The Word is faithful.] and worthy of all acceptance [worth receiving in totality], that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

All of us in ministry obtained mercy. We continually need more and more of God's mercy if we are to continue to function in ministry because none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes, but by God's mercy and grace we have forgiveness. Each of the Pastoral Epistles begins not just with grace and peace like the rest of the church epistles. They also note mercy, because all of us who are going to be servant leaders in the church will need plenty of God's mercy.

The challenge we are faced with is being willing to accept reproof and correction when we err. Philippians promises that when we are otherwise minded God will reveal it to us. The question is, "Will we have the meekness to accept it?" We will if we do not faint.

The word faint in II Corinthians 4:1 is *ekkakeō*. *Ekkakeō* means to faint, or to turn out a coward, or to lose one's courage especially in view of trial or difficulty or from moral weakness. I Peter 5:8 tells us that our "adversary the devil, who as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." When he roars we decide how we will react. The human weakness is to chicken out, to succumb to the fear. We will see, as we go to the Word, what we are to do in the face of the fear so that we do not turn out a coward or fail from moral weakness.

We will be tempted to faint. The New International Version translates "we faint not" as "we do not lose heart." We do not chicken out; we do not lose courage; we do not become cowards. When it comes to the ministry, we cannot chicken out. We cannot be afraid of what others will say or do. We have to speak the truth and not be afraid. I appreciate the many e-mails I receive each week, especially those that encourage me to keep speaking the truth even if people complain and do not like it. They often come at just the right time. That is just like God.

I am tired of being concerned about what others say or think. I am concerned about what God thinks, so I do not faint. I am not going to succumb to fear. I am not going to play politics. I love you, and I do not want to hurt your feelings. But, I love you so much; I am willing to risk hurting your feelings and tell you the truth. That is how we help each other, by telling each other the truth.

Affirmations: Praise God! I obtained mercy. I am not a coward, and I do not faint.

Recommended Reading: Day 11: I Timothy 1; Day 61: II Corinthians 4.

II Corinthians 4:2:

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

We do our best to be honest and forthright, never handling the Word of God deceitfully. The only way to do that is by the manifestation of the truth. We must know the truth and then live according to it, making it manifest or evident in our lives.

If you have ever been involved with competitive sports you may have heard the saying, "Winning is not everything. It is the only thing." This modern-day proverb aptly describes those who play to win and are willing to do so at all costs. These people will do *anything* to win, especially if they do not think they will get caught. However, the end does not justify the means. Paul is clear about his ministry ethics. He did not manipulate people. He was not misleading, disingenuous, or vicious. He did not utter false things to deceive or distort the truth. He did not motivate with fear. He was not after winning at all costs. After all, he was not promoting his own will, but God's.

Paul sets the example for us by refusing to practice various kinds of behavior that characterized his opponents. "Have renounced" in verse two is the reflexive past tense of *apeipomēn*; from *apo* away from and *epō* to say or speak. It means to be determined to avoid doing something – to renounce for and to oneself, to put aside, to reject. We reject the "secret and shameful ways" [NIV] or the "shameful deeds and underhanded methods" [NLT]. We simply refuse to become involved in doing anything we would not like anyone to know about. No matter how anyone else conducts their lives, we walk in truth.

Paul refuses to be dishonest, crafty or to handle the Word of God deceitfully. Although he knew of others who did, he would not. "Dishonesty" is *aischunē*, everywhere else it occurs in the KJV it is translated "shame." It refers to "a sensitivity respecting a possibility of dishonor, modesty, or shame." It is dishonesty that prompts one to conceal something from a feeling of shame.

"Craftiness" is *panourgia*. It is also translated "deception" [NIV] and "cunning" [NRSV]. It is a "rascally evil" a "trickery" that implies a "readiness to do anything." "Handling deceitfully" is *doloō*. It is also translated "distort" [NIV] and "falsify" [NRSV]. It means "to beguile by craft," "to make false through deception or distortion" and "to falsify or adulterate." Although Paul's ministry was not, other ministries were sleazy. If you have been hurt by a leader's sins, do not let it fester any longer. Cast it to God (I Peter 5:7). Life is too short to let Satan immobilize us by someone else's shameful example. God has plans for you! We must follow Paul's example of clear, open, and honest communication.

He writes to the Thessalonians about the same matter. Although he was shamefully treated, he was careful to never treat any one that way.

I Thessalonians 2:1-5:

For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: ² But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. ³ For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: ⁴ But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. ⁵

For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

Paul often ministered the gospel with much contention. "Contention" is the Greek word *agōn*, which was literally used of the *conflict, struggle and fight* of athletic contests. Friberg says it is used of exertion and self-denial in the face of opposition. It is used figuratively of intense nonphysical struggles with intense labor and earnestness. Paul certainly worked hard to take God's Word to God's people. Although the contest was intense he never succumbed to unethical tactics.

His action never came from deceit, uncleanness or guile. Instead when he spoke, he spoke in a manner that would please God not men. He was so honored to bear the ministry of reconciliation that he operated it in a manner that would reflect honor upon God. He did it right, and he spoke the truth and he did not use gamesmanship. He did not do it because he wanted something from them. He did not use flattering words to manipulate or coerce them. He was simply valiant for the truth by proclaiming the truth in a manner that was in accordance with the truth. Whether or not people were won was God's business.

II Corinthians 4:3-4:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴ In whom the god of this world [age] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Ultimately that is who we are fighting against, the god of this world. We know the ultimate source of the evil, lies and deception is the god of this world. Jesus called him "the prince of this world" (John 14:30; 16:11). Paul called him, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). He currently exercises his power is this world (I John 5:19; Revelation 12:12-13). He is a deceiver, "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). People do not realize that they are obeying Satan and worshipping him (Ephesians 2:2); they are just going with the flow of society.

It is important, however, to realize that Satan does not have a right to this world! He is a usurper, seeking to encroach on what is rightfully God's (Psalms 24:1; John 10:10). Do not allow him to take what God wants you to have. You have a right to every promise in the Book.

Affirmations: I do not handle the Word of God deceitfully. I'd rather please God than men.

Recommended Reading: Day 12: II Corinthians 4; Day 62: II Thessalonians 2.

II Corinthians 4:4:

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

“To blind” means to deprive of sight. People think they see clearly, but “they cannot see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.” God’s use of even figurative language is precise. Satan blinds them, so God makes us a savor of life to them. How wise of God to use smell to reach people who cannot see.

II Corinthians 2:14-17:

Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.¹⁵ For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: ¹⁶ To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Even if their eyes have been blinded they can still smell. God makes us a savor, or fragrance, of life so that those who want the truth of the glorious gospel of Christ can receive it. The devil blinds their eyes and deceives them with lies. We manifest the truth we know which becomes a sweet savour of Christ to those who want a knowledge of the truth. It’s a love of the truth, both in the written Word of God and in the person of Jesus Christ, that is the only remedy.

II Thessalonians 2:9-10: [NIV]

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,¹⁰ and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

They refused to grasp, receive or take hold of the truth. As a result, they become victims. They are not innocent unbelievers, but culpable and responsible for the truth they have heard. How do we counter Satan’s strategy of lies and deception? What should we do in the face of this deceptive, spiritual blindness that is maintained over lost mankind by the evil one? We do what Paul did:

1. **We fight with prayer and spiritual weapons** (II Corinthians 10:3-6; Ephesians 6:10-20). We undergird our ministry of reconciliation with earnest prayer and intercession. We also put on the whole armor of God and operate manifestations.
2. **We are open and honest in our own communication**, not deceptive or manipulative. (II Corinthians 1:12, 17; 4:2; 11:6; I Thessalonians 2:3-5)
3. **We declare the good news of Jesus Christ concerning the mystery with clarity** — even if it is met with disdain (I Corinthians 1:17-18). We fight falsehood with truth: the “belt of truth” and “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Ephesians 6:14, 17). There is spiritual power in the gospel for those who are being saved! Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).
4. **We love with great intensity.** “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. . . .” (John 3:16), and we so love that we give, too. It means we will have to be bold, courageous, intrepid, brave and stout-hearted.

Nobody said ministry is easy, friends. To minister to the lost is to engage in the spiritual battle as a determined participant, rather than a bystander — or worse, a spiritually blinded and neutralized believer.

Affirmations: I fight with prayer and spiritual weapons. I love with great intensity.

Recommended Reading: Day 13: II Corinthians 10; Day 63: Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 6:12:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

The fight is ultimately against spiritual wickedness from on high, but men champion the devil's causes, knowing and unknowingly.

Ephesians 4:14-15:

That we *henceforth* be no more children, 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;¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

It is men who lie in wait to deceive; we just keep speaking the truth in love. We counter deception with truth. God wants us to grow up and not be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. We do not need to try every new doctrine that comes our way. When somebody tells me, "How do you know until you try it? Just try it!" I step back. That is another red flag or red light for me. That is what drug pushers do. "Try it you'll like it. First one is free." The first one is always free, but it is paid for dearly in the end.

It is men who do that folks. It is men who are cunningly crafty. It is men who lie in wait to deceive. Some have good hearts. I do not think that they are all possessed. Ultimately we know it is the devil, but it is just men promoting their own agendas. They are trying to sell us their water softener, or their bread maker, or their book or whatever. That is just life. That is the way life is. But we have to be alert and the thing that will keep us safe and secure is our love for the truth.

II Corinthians 4:5-7:

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.⁶ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is seen and understood in the face of Jesus Christ. We can know our Lord face to face. In his image and presence we find the glory of God. God is most glorious, and He declares and promotes Himself with the truth. Not only do we have the written Word of Truth, we have access to him who affirmed he was the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is the true and living way and through him both Jew and Gentile have access unto the Father. God does not want us to be strangers and foreigners. He wants us to be fellow citizens in the household of God (Ephesians 2:19).

On the internet there is access to almost unlimited information. I do not believe everything I read on the internet. I am sorry. Unless it is on our website or the website of somebody else I know I do not believe it. One of the most popular reference sites is Wikipedia. Although it may be popular, it is not reliable. Wikipedia is an "encyclopedia" that enables editing by anyone who wants to express an opinion. So people have reinvented history to suit themselves. Today people make your own history and say anything they want.

Although God has promised His people victory over their enemies throughout both the Old and the New Testaments (Exodus 15:6; Deuteronomy 20:4, Psalms 18:3; 41:11; I Corinthians 15:57; I John 5:4) our enemies will not be utterly destroyed until the devil and death are cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10, 14, 15). Until then we will face opposition and hatred from those who rebel against God (John 15:18-19).

It is the Word of God that we believe and the power of God that we operate that appropriates our victory. It takes walking on the Word and walking by the spirit to be more than conquerors in this world. We often need not only to know what to say, but how, when and where to say it, as we fight valiantly for the truth.

Affirmations: I speak the truth in love. I don't wrestle against flesh and blood.

Recommended Reading: Day 14: Ephesians 2; Day 64: Exodus 15.

Psalms 41:2, 11:

The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; *and* he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. . . By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

When Paul was at Philippi he was confronted by a possessed damsel. He waited for the right time and place to handle the situation. Despite the consequences that ensued that landed him in prison, he was valiant for the truth in bringing deliverance to the damsel.

Acts 16:16-18:

And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: ¹⁷ The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. ¹⁸ And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

When Paul confronted Elymus in Acts 13, he recognized his enemy knowing what that enemy wanted to do. He was valiant for the truth leading the deputy into the family of faith.

Acts 13:7-12:

Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul, (who also is *called* Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, ¹⁰ And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

This enemy of the truth was intent on always perverting the right ways of the Lord, and Paul handled the situation. When Paul addresses the doctrinal error that the Galatians were falling into, he was not received as graciously as he should have been. In Galatians 4:16, Paul asks, “So then am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”

The Galatians had been bewitched into thinking that that the law was still appropriate (Galatians 3:1). Paul knew they were affected and fought for them against the error that was being promoted. He wanted them to grow up right, and like a father teaching his children, he felt he needed to change his voice.

Galatians 4:17-20:

They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. ¹⁸ But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in *a good thing*, and not only when I am present with you. ¹⁹ My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, ²⁰ I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

God’s people face enemies. Sometimes we may even become, as the modern proverb states, our own worst enemy. When we do not control our thinking, we may return to being alienated and enemies in *our* mind (Colossians 1:21). In the next lesson there will be a list of enemies of the truth. As I put the list together I asked myself, “Am I an enemy to myself or to anyone else in any of these categories?” Let’s proceed — valiant for the truth.

Affirmations: The Lord preserves and blesses me. I am zealous for good works.

Recommended Reading: Day 15: Acts 16; Day 65: Acts 13.

I Timothy 4:1-3:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; ³ Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

The following items made their way onto the list because of their association with the Greek words *pseudos*, (false) and *allos* or *heteros* (other). They misrepresent the truth and intend to deceive or provide another alternative to that which God sets forth in His Word as genuine. The list contains the name of the enemy in English. It is followed by the Greek word or phrase, the Strong's number, its number of occurrences, and the verses in which you can find it. There may also be other verses listed that may be helpful in understanding the item on the list.

ENEMIES OF TRUTH

- 1. FALSE APOSTLES:** *pseudapostolos* 5570 (1) (II Corinthians 11:13; Revelation 2:2)
- 2. FALSE BRETHREN:** *pseudadelphos* 5569 (2) (II Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4)
- 3. FALSE CHRISTS:** *pseudochristos* 5580 (2) (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22)
- 4. FALSE/OTHER DOCTRINES:** *heterodidaskaleō* 2085 (2) (Romans 16:17; Ephesians 4:14; I Timothy 1:3; 6:3)
- 5. FALSE/OTHER GOSPELS:** *heteros* 2087 *euangelion* 2098 (2) (Galatians 1:6-9; II Corinthians 11:4)
- 6. FALSE/OTHER JESUS:** *allos* 243 *Iēsous* 2424 (1) (II Corinthians 11:4)
- 7. FALSE PROPHETS:** *pseudoprophētēs* 5578 (11) (Matthew 7:15; 24:11; 24:24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; II Peter 2:1; I John 4:1; Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10)
- 8. WHAT IS FALSELY CALLED SCIENCE:** *gnōsis* 1108 *pseudōonumos* 5581 (1) (I Timothy 6:20)
- 9. FALSE WORDS/SPEAKING LIES:** *pseudologos* 5573 (1) (I Timothy 4:2)
- 10. FALSE/OTHER SPIRITS:** *heteros* 2087 *pneuma* 4151 (3) (I Kings 22:22-23; II Chronicles 18:21-22; Matthew 12:45; Luke 11:26; II Corinthians 11:4; I John 4:1-2)
- 11. FALSE TEACHERS:** *pseudodidaskalos* 5572 (1) (II Peter 2:1; I Timothy 1:7)
- 12. FALSE WITNESSES:** *pseudomartur* 5575 (2), *pseudomartueō* 5576 (5), *pseudomarturia* 5577 (2) (Matthew 26:59-60; I Corinthians 15:15; Matthew 19:18; Mark 10:19; 14:46, 57; Luke 18:20; Matthew 15:19)
- 13. FALSE OR LYING WONDERS:** *pseudos* 5579 *teras* 5059 (1) (Matthew 24:24; II Thessalonians 2:9)

Many of these items cluster in different sections of scripture. Therefore, instead of simply running through the list handling each individually, I felt it better to handle each of these major contexts and augment them with other scriptural support.

There is also much to be learned by the study of false gods (Jeremiah 7:9; Joshua 24:14-24; II Corinthians 4:4; II Thessalonians 2:4) and false pastors (Jeremiah 10:21; 12:10; 23:1-4; 50:6; Ezekiel 34:1-21; John 10:12). They are not included in the list because they are not associated with *pseudos* or *heteros/allos* in the New Testament.

We will see Paul valiant for the truth with the Galatians. He was so fully persuaded of the gospel he preached that he pronounced an anathema upon those who presented any other gospel. Then we will see Paul valiant for the truth with the Corinthians, where he, as a protective father of the bride, adamantly assaults those who oppose the truth. Next, we will investigate Paul beseeching Timothy to be valiant for the truth and keep the doctrine pure. Finally, we will see how these enemies use the subterfuge of lying signs and wonders to deceive and seduce even the elect of God.

Affirmations: I recognize enemies of truth. I appreciate genuine ministers of God.

Recommended Reading: Day 16: I Corinthians 15; Day 66: I John 4.

Galatians 1:6-7:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another [*heteros*] gospel [enemy #5 on the list].⁷ Which is not another [*allos*]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Paul was astonished by the Galatians' behavior. He was surprised, amazed and perhaps befuddled by how they turned from what he taught them to another gospel. It boggled Paul's mind to realize just how quickly they exchanged the truth for lies.

God has Paul use the figure of speech epanorthosis, correction, to arrest their attention and impress upon them the danger of what they were doing. First he states the truth. You turned to another, *heteros*, gospel. *Heteros* is the Greek word that is used when there are only two alternatives or the other is of a different kind. There are only two choices. There is the truth, the true gospel, and there is its misrepresentation. (Every other thing that purports to be the true gospel and is not.)

Although what they turned to appeared to be a gospel and was presented as the gospel, it was not. Paul's correction makes it clear, "which is not another." This word for another, *allos*, is used when there are many alternatives or when the choices are of the same kind. There are not other, *allos*, gospels. There are not other acceptable gospels of the same kind. That is what the enemies of the truth want you to believe. They are all really the same. Although they may claim it doesn't matter because they are all the same, they are not right. They are not the same.

Paul's correction is to restate the truth in a way that will make a greater impression upon them. The simple truth he initially stated was that this other, *heteros*, gospel was of a different kind. His correction was to assure them that they were not the same. It is not the same gospel with just a little different take on it, just a little different spin. Paul is clarifying what the enemies of truth do. They were the "some that trouble you, who would pervert the gospel of Christ."

They were changing the true gospel of Christ into a perversion. They were using this perverted gospel in an attempt to turn the Galatians away from the truth. The word "troubled" in this verse is the Greek word *tarassō*. It means to agitate, to take away one's calmness of mind, to disturb one's equanimity. It stirs one up; it makes one disquieted and restless. They may use the same words, but their intent was not the same as Paul's. Neither was their message, despite what they may have claimed.

Galatians 1:8-9:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel [enemy #5 on the list] unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, if any *man* preach any other [enemy #5 on the list] unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Whoa! That is heavy! This is quite a departure from how Paul normally addressed issues. Paul was the apostle of grace was he not? Yet he says that these enemies of the truth, who preach another gospel, are to be accursed. He does not just say it once. He repeats it for emphasis. There is something most dramatic in his opposition to those who would pervert the gospel of Christ. Can you sense how adamant Paul was? These figures of speech bring the point home.

It was important for Paul to identify these enemies of truth. Their perversion of the gospel causes confusion and substitutes lies for the truth. Men and women who function like this must not be allowed to continue to have influence within the church. Paul adamantly opposed them and so should we.

In the next chapter Paul shares an incident that took place when he and Barnabas went to Jerusalem. They shared the gospel with the most reputable believers. Even there, false brethren tried to bring them under the bondage of the law.

Galatians 2:1-5:

Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also.² And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.³ But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:⁴ And that because of false brethren [enemy #2 on the list] unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:⁵ To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Paul, Barnabas and Titus did not give place or yield to the pressure of the false brethren. It says not "for an hour." We would say "not for a minute." Note the reason they refused to draw back or give place: "that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." That is being valiant for the truth and is worth emulating.

Affirmations: I only preach the true gospel. I continue in the truth so that the truth of the gospel might continue.

Recommended Reading: Day 17: Galatians 1; Day 67: Galatians 2.

II Corinthians 11:1-3: Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me. ² For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. ³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Again, Paul departs from his typical manner of discourse and asks the Corinthians for some leniency as he handles the next very important matter. He does not like to boast, and certainly not in anything other than in Christ. He has just said in verse seventeen of chapter ten: “He who boasts, let him boast in the lord.” However as he faces these enemies of truth he is obliged to respond in this manner. In essence Paul says, “All right, I’ll play your game for a moment. I’m sorry I must do so, as it is foolishness, and not at all the way I like to conduct myself.”

When Paul asks them to bear with him (i.e. to tolerate him) and allow him to be foolish for a moment (verse 1), it is for good reason. Some of those Paul led to faith in Christ had begun to follow these enemies of truth and disparage their spiritual father (I Corinthians 4:1-13). These enemies of truth seemed so wise, so eloquent, so persuasive, so convincing. . . Paul is simply asking for the same tolerance they have extended to others. Then he tells them why in verses 2 & 3.

In verse two Paul presents himself as the “father of the bride.” He reminds the Corinthians of the relationship he has with them and the deep obligation he feels toward them. He became, as it were, their spiritual father, and they became his virgin daughter. Now, as their father, it is his duty to keep them pure and innocent. Paul had good reason to be concerned about their purity and devotion to the gospel of Christ. This imagery of the proud father of a beautiful young woman conveys excellently Paul’s love and zeal toward the Corinthians.

He recognized the trap they had fallen into and the danger they faced. Although he used the word “fear” it was not an unfounded paranoia; he sensed a very clear and present danger. It was the same thing that Eve faced in the Garden of Eden. The serpent of old, cunning creature that he is, deceived Eve by perverting the truth. With all his smooth talk he omitted, added and changed words until the truth was hidden and Eve believed his lies. Paul feared that the enemies of truth he identifies for them, with all their silver-tongued oratory, would do the same. They intended to lead the Corinthians astray from a simple and pure commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ that Paul preached in his gospel.

These enemies of truth in Corinth were intent on corrupting the church by turning the attention and affection of this espoused “bride” toward someone other than Christ. By referring to the Corinthian church as a new bride who needed the protection of her father, Paul was indicating that they were vulnerable to those who would deceive and corrupt them. The reason Paul gives for asking for their indulgence is because he is their father and it is his responsibility to see that their purity is protected and their simplicity of life is maintained.

Now he proceeds to identify the enemies of truth and their activities.

II Corinthians 11:4:

For if he that cometh preacheth [*kērussō*] another Jesus [enemy #6 on the list], whom we have not preached [*kērussō*], or if ye receive [*lambanō*] another spirit [enemy #10 on the list.], which ye have not received [*lambanō*], or another [*heteros*] gospel [enemy #6 on the list.], which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with [tolerate] *him*.

If they preach another Jesus or introduce another spirit or gospel, they are enemies of truth. Do not tolerate them. That is part of the problem the Corinthians had. They tolerated what they should not have tolerated (i.e. immorality and doctrinal falsehood), and they did not tolerate what they should have tolerated (The quirks, idiosyncrasies, personality eccentricities and foibles we all have that the enemies of truth were using against Paul.)

Do not believe everything anyone says about Jesus. He has been misrepresented. Jesus has been falsely presented as having homosexual relations with the twelve; he has been portrayed as sexually promiscuous with Mary Magdalene and others. We need to know Jesus according to Paul’s gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ concerning the mystery of godliness.

There are spirits other than holy spirit. They are evil spirits and should not be allowed to function within the church. They can function incorporeally and in ectoplasm that can be felt and experienced in the natural world. When we receive people who are operating evil spirits we frequently receive the doctrines of devils they propose. God wants us to know the truth and be valiant for it.

Affirmations: I love the simplicity that is in Christ. I refuse to let the serpent beguile me through his subtilty.
Recommended Reading: Day 18: Genesis 3; Day 68: II Corinthians 11.

I Timothy 1:1-3:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is* our hope; ² Unto Timothy, *my* own son [true child] in the faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. ³ As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine [enemy #4 on the list]. ⁴ Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do*.

The church in Ephesus had known the blessing of God in a way that few churches in history will ever repeat. For three years the apostle Paul himself ministered there (Acts 20:31). Before he left he warned the church elders, saying, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). Paul knew that the church at Ephesus, like any church, would come under attack from lying prophets and teachers, and it happened. Is there any wonder why he charged Timothy with protecting them?

This first epistle to Timothy was written when the church was on the rise, the Word was prevailing and things are going great. In it, the first thing that Paul reminds Timothy is the instruction he gave him at Ephesus which was to “charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”

Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to first charge some not to teach other doctrines and second not to give heed to fables, and endless genealogies. Timothy was responsible to know what sound doctrine was and recognize when others taught something different from it. Sound doctrine, *hugiaiō didaskaleō*, occurs four times in the pastoral epistles. It is a major emphasis for those who want to pastor God’s people.

I Timothy 1:9-10;

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to **sound doctrine**.

II Timothy 4:3-4: 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; ⁴ And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Titus 1:9: Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by **sound doctrine** both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Titus 2:1: But speak thou the things which become **sound doctrine**.

Along with the false doctrine Timothy was to teach the believers not to pay attention to fables and endless genealogies. These fables were fictional, not true, but a part of Judean agnostic tradition. Some took the form of “war stories,” things people have lived through that had taken on superhuman proportions. The endless genealogies were pointless pedigrees. They provided bragging rights and were intended to vaunt certain people above others because of a family lineage or who they knew or who got them born again.

The same idea comes up toward the end of the epistle, also.

I Timothy 6:3-5: If any man teach otherwise [*heterodidaskaleō*, enemy #4 on the list], and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; ⁴ He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings ⁵ Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

When people teach other doctrines, they are not consenting to wholesome or sound words. The standard we hold to is the doctrine according to godliness. That is the doctrine of the mystery of godliness that Paul taught. Godliness is the epitome of the practical side of the teaching of the mystery. Verses four and five show how those who teach otherwise are practicing error. Instead of being valiant for the truth, they are destitute of truth. We are to withdraw ourselves from such.

Affirmations: I don’t give heed to fables and endless genealogies. I hold fast the faithful word as I have been taught.

Recommended Reading: Day 19: I Timothy 6; Day 69: Titus 1 & 2.

Mark 13:22:

For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if *it were* possible, even the elect.

Enemies of the truth may use signs and wonders to seduce and deceive. When warning God's people about false Christs and false prophets Jesus noted how they would use signs and wonders as part of their deception.

Matthew 24:24:

For there shall arise false Christs [enemy #3 on the list], and false prophets [enemy #7 on the list], and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

“Christ” means “the anointed one.” Many may claim falsely to have a special anointing and point to the signs and wonders they perform as evidence. However, in addition to the genuine godly signs and wonders by which God delivers His people, there are also lying signs and wonders that the devil uses as bait to trap people. The bait is effective. It is so effective that the very elect may be deceived. “The elect” is a term also used in our administration by both Paul and Peter referring to born-again believers elected or chosen by God. (See Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; I Thessalonians 1:4; II Timothy 2:10; I Peter 1:2; 5:13; II Peter 1:10.)

II Thessalonians 2:8-10:

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁹ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders [enemy #13 on the list], ¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

There is the key to it all: “because they received not the love of the truth.” That is what keeps us going. We have the love of the truth that keeps us on course. It is only a love for the truth that motivates us to pursue the truth until we can distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit. In my life, there have been times when my love has been challenged, but praise God I have made it through.

If we do not take the bait, the devil will even go so far as to suborn perjury through false witnesses to try to convince us.

Matthew 26:59=60:

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness [enemy #12 on the list] against Jesus, to put him to death; ⁶⁰ But found none: yea, though many false witnesses [enemy #12 on the list] came, *yet* found they none. At the last came two false witnesses [enemy #12 on the list].

People are false witnesses because they do not testify to the truth. The true witness of the spirit God allows us to operate the manifestations of the spirit. Lying signs and wonders are the counterfeit of the true witness. They are designed to deceive. Indeed, Paul said if Christ was not raised from the dead we would all be false witnesses. Not only would our words be untrue, but the evidence of the presence of the holy spirit that the operation of the manifestations of the spirit are said to provide would also be misleading.

I Corinthians 15:15:

Yea, and we are found false witnesses [enemy #12 on the list] of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

Matthew 15:19 declares that a false witness proceeds from an evil heart. The greatest protection against it is the purity of heart of which the epistles of Timothy and Titus speak (I Timothy 1:5; II Timothy 2:22; Titus 1:15).

II Peter 2:1:

But there were false prophets [enemy #7 on the list] also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers [enemy #11 on the list] among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

We should not be shocked when false teachers spring up among us. We should be able, with reproof, to help those who err. But if they refuse the help and maintain damnable heresies, we must identify them as enemies of the truth. This frequently happens when people desire to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm (I Timothy 1:7).

Affirmations: I love the truth. With God's help, I keep my heart pure.

Recommended Reading: Day 20: Matthew 24; Day 70: Matthew 26.

I John 4:1-4: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ² Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ³ And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. ⁴ Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

John also charged the believers to not believe every spirit. It is our responsibility to scrutinize, examine and prove the spirit. It will take a clear awareness of the genuine to enable us to distinguish it from the counterfeit. These evil spirits are at work in the world, but we have no reason to fear them because we have overcome them because the holy spirit we have and operate is far greater.

In II Corinthians 11:4 we find the same use of *heteros* gospel that we read in Galatians chapter one. Again, it is a *heteros* gospel, a different kind of gospel. Paul was adamant about opposing these things. Paul continues his boasting, admitting that the errors he may have made were for their benefit. He was genuine and authentic and loving and kept on speaking the truth.

II Corinthians 11:5-12:

For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. ⁶ But though *I be* rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things. ⁷ Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? ⁸ I robbed other churches, taking wages of *them*, to do you service. ⁹ And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*. ¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ Wherfore? because I love you not? God knoweth. ¹² But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

Paul's sacrificial lifestyle is evidence of his love for them. He sets himself apart from those who are frauds, those who are simply into ministry for the money. Paul will do everything he can to distinguish himself from those who want to be considered his equals, but who are in reality false apostles. I love what Bob Deffinbaugh says about these verses: "One thing he [Paul] knows for sure—they [these enemies of truth] are not going to minister free of charge. This is one area in which they will not attempt to look like Paul. By his selfless, sacrificial lifestyle, Paul sets himself apart from the greedy hucksters who take advantage of others by pretending to be servants of God. Do Paul's opponents boast? Let them boast in ministering free of charge, or let them realize they are nothing like Paul."

Paul now gets right to the point and exposes these enemies of truth for exactly who they are.

II Corinthians 11:13-14:

For such *are* false apostles [enemy #1 on the list.], deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

These false apostles are deceitful workers. Following Satan's lead they misrepresent themselves as apostles of Christ. Just as apostles are sent to bring new light to the generation and culture to which they minister, these false apostles feign doing the same. They report visions from God and new, usually extra-biblical, light as their credentials. They often fool even the very elect of God. Even the best of us can miss it. They are false apostles because they are liars.

The church of Ephesus in Revelation is commended because they identified false apostles for who they were.

Revelation 2:2

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

There remains one more on our list from II Corinthians 11, and that is false brethren. In II Corinthians 11:23-33 Paul lists several of the things he suffered for the sake of the gospel. In verse twenty-six he lists some of the perils he endured.

II Corinthians 11:26:

In journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren [*pseudadelphos*];

These brethren are deceptive. Instead of supplying support, they in reality opposed the work Paul was doing. Even though these brethren were born again and part of the family of God, the term false brethren applied to them because they were deceptively working against Paul putting him in perilous situations. Paul may have been unaware initially that these were false brethren. It was not until he saw their fruit that he was able to identify them correctly.

Affirmations: I live sacrificially and it's worth it. I'm not guided by suspicion, but by love.

Recommended Reading: Day 21: II Corinthians 11; Day 71: Revelation 2.

Revelation 12:11:

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

The Bible is replete with examples of men and women who did their Father's will. Men and women who dared to go beyond the limits of their natural abilities. . . men and women who dared to do the impossible and change the course of history. Our lives can make a difference. We may never know how big a difference, but we must be willing to dare valiantly in great causes for God.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure. . . than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat." Cecil Beaton also said, "Be daring, be different, be impractical, be anything that will assert integrity of purpose and imaginative vision against the play-it-safers the creatures of the commonplace, the slaves of the ordinary." We are free to be whom God made us to be, and that is not just like everyone else. That will take some "grit."

Sometimes I wonder: "Do I have "true grit?" Am I made of the "right stuff?" If the Bible is right, the answer to both questions is affirmative. We have the wherewithal we need to accomplish great things for God. Jeremiah longed to be with men *valiant for the truth*, but he lamented that there were none in Israel. That is where we can come in. We are among those who are valiant for the truth. We can walk in the footsteps of the master; we can demonstrate that we have what is required. We are made from the *right stuff*. We have *true grit*.

Jeremiah 9:2-3:

Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they *be* all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.³ 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.

In the movie, *True Grit* the elusive nature of "grit" is a theme spanning the full length of the film. Although the quality is never explicitly defined, it seems to be just the right combination of toughness and bravery to get the most dangerous job done. It may not appear outwardly until absolutely necessary, but those who have it will summon it when they truly need it. Quite naturally, it also includes a certain amount of self-sacrifice. In the movie none of the characters, no matter how resourceful or upstanding, emerged untouched by pain and suffering. It was as if it was enough merely to survive. In the movie, escaping outright destruction seems to be the ultimate test of who had grit and who had none.

When the dust settles, we will still be standing. When the faint of heart vanishes, we still remain. When the call for help goes out, we will be there to answer and respond. Let us invest ourselves in people we love. Let us give ourselves to them and serve them wholeheartedly. As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all, especially unto them of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10) and live valiant for the truth.

I recently ran across an ancient prayer. It did not include the words, "in the name of Jesus Christ," but it was prayed with the authority with which he commissioned us. The prayer itself is short and to the point and appropriate for our study:

From cowardice that shrinks from new truth,
From the laziness that's content with half-truth,
From the arrogance from the one who thinks he knows all the truth,
Oh God of truth,
Deliver me!¹

1. From Lists to Live By compiled by Alcie Gray, Steve Stevens, and John Van Diest, Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, OR page 80.

Affirmations: I have what it takes to be valiant for the truth. I invest myself in people I love.

Recommended Reading: Day 22: Revelation 12; Day 72: Jeremiah 9.

Jude 3:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

The central theme of the epistle of Jude is contending for the faith. After the salutation, Jude immediately handles the purpose for the epistle. What he intended to do was interrupted by God, Who had something else for him to do. Jude wanted to write about the common salvation, but God insisted that he exhort them “to earnestly contend for the faith” instead.

Jude 3:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the [our] common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

This is written to the beloved, part of the church of born-again believers. This term is one of special endearment used of people with whom one has a close and special relationship. The word carries the meaning of someone who was deeply cared for and completely devoted to. They were not only beloved to God; they were beloved to Jude.

Jude so loved them that he gave all (the greatest possible degree) of diligence to write to them. He intended to write about the common salvation, but he didn’t. The common salvation is that which Jesus Christ made available to Jew and Gentile alike. This common salvation is what Jude wanted to share with those to whom he was writing. The critical Greeks texts read, “our common salvation.” It is something we all share.

But, like I said, he never did. Instead, the King James Version says that “it was needful for” him to change and exhort them “to earnestly contend for the faith.” However, “needful” doesn’t approach the intensity that the Greek word carries. There was a divine compulsion. Jude said he was a slave and a slave does what his master requires. Jude had no choice; he had to do what was requested. It was laid upon him as a burden he couldn’t ignore. We know the Word of God was written by revelation. Jude simply did as he was told.

The repetition of “to write” is the figure of speech polyptoton, the repetition of the same part of speech in different inflections. It calls attention to the act of writing, giving us the purpose and intend for doing so. Jude gave the utmost haste, earnestness and diligence to write and although what he intended to communicate was altered, the care and urgency of doing so was not. The writing took the form of an exhortation. He is calling them to his side to admonish, beseech, beg, entreat, encourage, comfort and strengthen them to contend earnestly for the faith, the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

The Greek word translated “that ye should earnestly contend” is *epagonizomai*. It is used no place else in the New Testament. It means to “agonize with intense determination.” The Louw-Nida lexicon says it means “to exert intense effort on behalf of something.” That something here is “the faith,” which we will get to next. It comes from the root word, *agonizomai* with the preposition *epi* on the front of it. *Epi* when used of purpose in compound words adds the idea of “for” or “unto.” Prefixed to *agonizomai*, it points to the purpose for which we contend, i.e. “the faith.”

We are to contend “for” or “on behalf of” the faith. This is serious, urgent business. The article is attached to faith here to set it apart as the right way to believe in contrast to all other ways to believe. It is used of the content (beliefs and doctrines) of what Christians are supposed to believe. There is only one faith and we must believe what was delivered unto us. Jude was valiant for the truth, and he was encouraging his beloved brethren to be so also.

Affirmations: I contend for the faith which was delivered to me. I invest myself in people I love.

Recommended Reading: Day 23: Jude; Day 73: Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:3-6:

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.⁴ *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism,⁶ One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

Paul initially sought to destroy the faith, but he believed regarding it and then preached what he had received.

Galatians 1:23: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past [Paul speaking of himself] now preacheth the faith [the true and right contend of what Christians are supposed to believe] which once he destroyed.

Paul was preaching the genuine thing. He had changed, and he challenged us to examine ourselves to see if we abide in the faith and faithfully preach it.

II Corinthians 13:5: Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

We are to contend earnestly for the faith because there are those who work against it, like Elymas in Acts 13.

Acts 13:8: But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Paul care for the church included exhorting the disciples to continue in the faith.

Acts 14:22: Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

When individuals stay put and continue in the faith, whole churches can get established in the faith.

Acts 16:5: And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to stand fast in the faith.

I Corinthians 16:13: Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

He also congratulated the Colossians for being established in the faith.

Colossians 2:5-7: For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith [believing] in Christ.⁶ As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him: ⁷ Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

The faith includes the proper teaching of the mystery and the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a bigger more inclusive term and includes both of them.

I Timothy 3:9: Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

The mystery is part of the faith. Paul also warned Timothy that some would depart from the faith.

I Timothy 4:1: Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Part of the faith is properly providing for one's own. If one does not do so, he is worse than an infidel.

I Timothy 5:8: But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Paul remained faithful and finished his course having kept the faith.

II Timothy 4:7: I have fought [*agonizomai*] a good fight [*agon*], I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

Paul also encouraged Timothy to do the same (I Timothy 6:12). In order to fight the good fight, Paul had to strive for the mastery [*agonizomai*] in regard to disciplining his own life to serve God's people.

Yes, we are contending for the faith, but the prize is people. Paul called them his "joy and crown" (Philippians 4:1). He described Epaphras as "laboring fervently" [*agonizomai*] in prayer for the Colossians (Colossians 4:1). While Paul was *epagonizomai*[ing] for the faith, Epaphras was also *agonizomai*[ing], having great conflict for the people (Colossians 2:1).

Colossians 1:28-29:

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: ²⁹ Whereunto I also labour, striving [*agonizomai*] according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Affirmations: I stand fast in the faith. I will finish my course and keep the faith.

Recommended Reading: Day 24: Galatians 1; Day 74: Colossians 1.

Jude 3:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

“Once” could also be translated “once for all.” It is the Greek word, *hapax*, and it means a single occurrence to the exclusion of any other similar occurrence. It could be rendered “once and for all” or “once and never again.”¹ The Companion Bible has a note suggesting, “once for all.” This word is most illuminating.

It was once delivered. Jude said it had been done. Here we are 2000 years after the faith was first delivered to the saints, and we are surrounded with hundreds of sects and cults who claim to have a new word of revelation that now completes God’s word to mankind. Mohammed offered his Koran. Joseph Smith his Book of Mormon. Sun Moon his Divine Principle. Some even consider every contemporary intellectual trend as a suitable addition or replacement for the Bible. However, any claim of additional revelation outside the Bible is evidence of apostasy (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; & Revelation 22:18-19).

In his last message delivered to the pastors of the church in Ephesus and recorded in Acts 20, Paul warned them that after his departure “shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” He also warned that men shall “arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). The wolves who pervert the faith are professing Christians. They are pastors and church leaders who have gone astray.

There are some striking things about Jude’s instruction. First, that our faith is not something that anybody has made up; it was delivered to us. It is not fabricated, or worked up by a collection of individuals. It is one body of facts that was consistently delivered by authoritative persons, the apostles. It has come to us through them. Furthermore, Jude says that it was once for all delivered. It was only given at one time in the history of the world. It does not need any additions. The sense of these words is “once for all turned over for safekeeping.” The Lord has entrusted us with His Word. It is completed and canonized. We must keep it, uncorrupted and intact, for every generation until He returns. This we do by preaching and teaching all of it to every creature, to the greatest extent we possibly can.

Now some think that contending for the faith means to use the Bible as a club with which to bludgeon people. Such people feel that they need to be very contentious in contending for the faith. But, this is not what Jude has in mind at all. He is simply talking about the need for proclaiming the truth. As Charles Spurgeon used to put it: “The truth is like a lion. Whoever heard of defending a lion? Just turn it loose and it will defend itself.” This is the way the word of God is. If we proclaim it, it will defend itself.

The church is always one generation short of extinction. If our generation fails to guard the truth and entrust it to our children, then that will be the end! When you think of the saints and martyrs who suffered and died so that we might have God’s truth, it makes you want to stand up and take your place beside them being faithful unto death.

We must contend without being contentious and be confident without being arrogant. We must choose winning ways and winning words in the pursuit of winning hearts for Him. We must be tough as nails on the truth, but soft as butter on people. We can refuse to compromise on the truth, but be flexible in our methods, becoming “all things to all men” that by all means we might save some (I Corinthians 9:22).

Finally, note that the safeguarding of the faith was not merely to specially trained theologians or other professionals, but to “the saints.” Every Christian believer is commanded to “earnestly contend for the faith.” “Saints” is the Greek word *hagios* used of those set apart by the gift of holy spirit. It refers to all born again believers in our administration. They were the recipients of this special delivery package. It had been hidden away until such time as God revealed it to His apostles and prophets. Verse 3 which details the purpose of the epistle begins with “beloved” and ends with “saints.” It is this special group of beloved saints that Jude challenges to “earnestly contend for the faith.” This group includes both you and me. It’s time we get busy!

1. So do the ASV, CJB, ERV, ESV, MIT, NAB, NAS, NAU, NET, NIB, NIV, NJB, NKJ, NRS, RSV, TNIV. The GWN, NIRV, NLT & have “once for all time.” The BBE has “once and for ever.”

Affirmations: I contend for the faith without being contentious. I act confidently without being arrogant.

Recommended Reading: Day 25: Revelation 22; Day 75: Deuteronomy 4.

Philippians 3:1-3: Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe.² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.³ For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

In the first three verses of Philippians 3, we find Paul valiant for the truth regarding true worship. He wants the Philippians safe, so he warns them because he knows what is at stake. We'll see in verse one that Paul tells them why this is important enough for him to repeat himself. We'll see in verse two that Paul, in the most emphatic and dramatic way, warns the Philippians. Then we'll see in verse three he gives them the reason for the warning and shows them what is at stake.

God has given us the liberty to worship Him in spirit and in truth. However, there are those who say, "You do not have to do anything. You have your ticket to heaven punched, and nothing else is required. Do whatever you want." As if they had license to do anything without responsibility or accountability. Then, at the other extreme, are those who try to legislate one's every action. They try to mold one's flesh. They manipulate. They regulate with laws which they enforce with guilt, shame and condemnation. Paul wanted God's people to walk in liberty and avoid the extremes of legalism and license. Verse one introduces the warning.

Paul wrote the same things that he told them when he was present with them. The only way to stay safe is by constantly reminding ourselves what God through Christ has accomplished for us. Repeating himself was not grievous to Paul. It should never be tedious for a teacher to repeat himself. He who loves to teach must acknowledge the need to repeat things to encourage learning and establish our hearts in the truth.

"Grievous" is the Greek word, *oknēros*, which only occurs three times in the KJV and the other two times it is translated "slothful." According to the Louw-Nida lexicon it pertains to shrinking from something or hesitating to engage in something worthwhile, possibly implying lack of ambition or laziness. Paul didn't hesitate; he wasn't reluctant to do it, and he didn't find it tedious. To neglect to do it would have been slothful and wrong because the Philippians needed it. We act on behalf of others and for their benefit. If we are honest, we need repetition as much as those to whom we preach and teach.

"Safe" indicates that Paul wanted the Philippians "free from danger." In order to ensure that, he continues with a warning — a very emphatic warning. A warning marked and emphasized with many figures of speech.

Beware! Did you see that? It says, "Beware!" People can get so ecumenical in their thinking that if it carries the label "Christian" it must be OK. Well, I'm here to tell you, not everything that comes in the guise of Christianity is OK. There is much we need to beware of. Otherwise, why write such a stern, rigorous, uncompromising warning.

Paul left Timothy at Ephesus when he went into Macedonia so that he might charge some that they teach no other doctrine as it says in I Timothy 1:3. That's the very first charge Paul committed to Timothy. See, it comes back to the issue of truth, of true doctrine.

Paul warns the Philippians because there was danger. There would be no issue at all, no need to say anything unless there were people pushing the wrong stuff. Paul says, "Beware!" because there is danger involved.

"Beware" in the Greek word, *blepto*, one of the words meaning "to see." A more literal translation would be "watch out for," or "look out for." I can't tell you how many times I have been saved from harm hearing someone shout, "Look out!" In each of the three uses in verse two "beware" is a present imperative. That means it's a command to continue to do something already started. It's continuous action; so, continue to beware don't just beware once and then forget about it. The warning is so emphatic because the danger is so great.

There is an element of being "proactive" to it. Think of it like walking in a minefield. If one of them goes off, it's already too late. It is as if they are walking through a minefield, spiritually. We must watch every step; we must look carefully at every place we put our feet. We do it ahead of time; we do it proactively. We must continually be aware of the danger and beware as we walk. It has the urgency of an APB (an All Points Bulletin). "Be on the lookout for..." You can look at this as a big dose of preventative medicine.

Affirmations: I rejoice in the Lord. I stay aware of what's going on around me.

Recommended Reading: Day 26: Philippians 3; Day 76: Philippians 4.

Philippians 3:1-3: Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe.² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.³ For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

The repetition of “beware of” at the beginning of each of the phrases in verse 2 is the figure of speech anaphora. This triple play is a very big deal. Of course, the emphasis is on the command “**beware**.” The shortness of each phrase makes the anaphora even more powerful. The fact that each of the words following “Beware!” begins with a “k” also adds to the intensity. (*Kuon, kakos ergatēs, and katatomē*) That’s not the proper figure alliteration which is the repetition of the same letter or syllable at the beginning of successive words. However, when combined with anaphora as it is here, this is the form it takes by necessity.

In the Aramaic, the word “safe” and the word “beware” come from the same root. That’s polyptoton. Then it’s repetition at the end of one sentence and at the beginning of the next is the figure of speech anadiplosis.

The use of “dogs” is the figure hypocatastasis. It’s the most poignant of the figures of comparison. Don’t beware of people like dogs. Don’t beware of people who are dogs. Beware of dogs! Do you see how the force of the figures increased as we went through them? It refers to backbiters, vicious gossips, those outside not to be allowed into the house.

Here it is used of the legalistic Judeans. It was a term of disdain used in the Jewish culture for the Gentiles. So, for Paul to turn it around and use it on these Jewish legalists was deliberate and powerful and perhaps even a bit ironic.

“The concision” is another figure; it is a play on words. It’s a knock off of the word “circumcision.” “Circumcision” is the Greek word “*peritomē*.” “Concision” is the Greek word “*katatomē*.” It literally means *cutting down into* and was used of hacking or chopping up sacrificial meat. It was also used in the LXX for the worshippers of Baal who cut themselves in I Kings 18:26. It is a contemptuous word for circumcision (a hyperbole for circumcision) with the connotation of *mutilation*. Then by metonymy for those who practice such mutilation. A similar use is found in Galatians 5:12.

Galatians 5:11-13:

And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.¹² I would they were even cut off which trouble you.¹³ For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Let’s not forget the context in which we find these verses in Philippians. Chapter two finished with the excellent examples of Jesus, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, and they are juxtaposed with these three epithets: dogs [*kuon*], evil workers [*kakos ergatēs*], and the concision [*katatomē*]. Paul extols Jesus’ example and commends Timothy and Epaphroditus, his fellowlaborers, but he warns the Philippians to avoid contact with these dogs at all costs.

Just who are these people of whom Paul is speaking. . . these dogs. . . these evil workers. . . these mutilators of the flesh. Paul is not speaking about three different groups of people. These are not distinct epithets; they overlap. In fact, they overlap so much that all three are referring to the same people. This is similar to a hendiadys, where three things are said, but one thing is meant. It could be translated: “Beware of dogs, yes destructively evil-working, mutilating dogs.” Calling someone who prides himself on good works an evil worker is again deliberate and powerful and perhaps even a bit ironic.

Paul doesn’t have issues with the Jews in general. He loves them. His heart was so big for them that it got him into trouble by going to Jerusalem when he should not have. He didn’t have a problem with circumcision either or with people wanting to continue to circumcise their sons.

The people about whom the Philippians needed to be warned and prepared to oppose, were those who subverted fellowships saying that circumcision and other forms of legalistic practices in the flesh were necessary for salvation. They are also not necessary for worship. In verse three we will see just the opposite. These people were misrepresenting the heart of God and trying to regulate the flesh.

Affirmations: I do my best to keep my brethren safe. I don’t use my liberty as an occasion to the flesh.

Recommended Reading: Day 27: Philippians 2; Day 77: Galatians 5.

Philippians 3:1-3: Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe.² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.³ For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

In verse 3 “for” introduces the reason for the warning in verse two. This is what they stand in danger of losing if they do not watch out for themselves. We must not exchange the truth of God for lies. Worship must remain a priority. We must provide that which God seeks.

Paul has no problem with circumcision. He says we are (present tense) the circumcision. Paul understood the heart of circumcision. Even in the Old Testament circumcision was not to be just a ceremonial act. It was to carry an appropriate attitude of heart. Of course, the attitude was not apparent in a boy being circumcised, but it was to be part of the parents’ responsibility to understand what circumcision was and to teach their son what it meant and how to live “circumcised lives.” Circumcision was an outward symbol of an internal attitude of heart. It was the attitude of heart that was paramount.

Deuteronomy 10:16: Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

Jeremiah 4:4a: Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart. . . .

Jeremiah 9:25-26: Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all *them which are* circumcised with the uncircumcised; ²⁶ Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all *these* nations *are* uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart.

Romans 2:28-29: For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

We don’t desire the praise of men but rather the praise of God. When we worship as He instructs by adhering to the truth of God’s Word and operating the spirit, we will have His praise. True circumcision is the circumcision done by Christ and is a matter of inward purification and consecration.

Colossians 2:10-11:

And ye are complete in him [Christ], which is the head of all principality and power: ¹¹ In whom [Christ] also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

Those who are the true circumcision render devotion to God from a pure heart. We worship by the spirit of God. There is no other way. We can no longer worship by “the dead works of the flesh” (Hebrews 9:14). This is what Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well was on its way. Well, we have it available to us today. It takes both spirit and truth or it’s no deal.

So, when we read, “for we are the circumcision,” Paul is saying, “The truth is that we (the church of God) are the circumcision.” However, Paul isn’t saying everyone in the church of God comprises this “circumcision.” Just like not everyone in the Old Testament who had the sign in the flesh had the sign in their hearts, not everyone in the New Testament Church of God has it either. Well then, who has it? Who does Paul identify as “the true circumcision?”

These wonderful folks are identified not by the absence of their foreskin, but by another triumphant trio of characteristics. **They worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.** These are the marks of a true believer, not whether or not you see a foreskin. There is a polysyndeton joining and emphasizing each of these three parts. You can identify the true circumcision by these three things. That’s a trilogy that sets the standard for our administration.

Affirmations: I worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. I am complete in Christ.

Recommended Reading: Day 28: Romans 2; Day 78: Deuteronomy 10.

Philippians 3:1-3: Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe.² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.³ For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

First, it says *we worship God in spirit*. This could also be translated *we worship by the spirit of God*. The word worship in verse 3 is the Greek word *latreuō*. It is always used properly of God, never of man. This kind of worship is reserved for and provided to the One True God. It is loving and serving Him with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength. The entire context sets worshipping God by the spirit and worshipping God by the flesh in opposition to one another. Let's look at a couple of other uses of this verb.

Acts 24:14:

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship [*latreuō*] I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets [That's the truth.].

“Believing” is a present participle in Greek which means that the action of believing goes on the same time as the main verb in the sentence which is “to worship.” We worship and serve God as we believe the truth.

Romans 1:9:

For God is my witness, whom I serve [*latreuō*] with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

Let God be our witness too because we serve Him with our spirit in the gospel of his Son and make intercession by praying for one another.

Next, it says, “We rejoice in Christ Jesus.” The Greek word for “rejoice” is *kauchaomai*, meaning to glory or boast. We worship God and we rejoice in Christ Jesus; we boast of Christ Jesus; we glory in all Christ Jesus has accomplished for us. He is the cause of our rejoicing. We brag about our big brother, and what he has done for us and what he can do for others.

He can save to the uttermost, and we'll talk to anybody about him. He's provided forgiveness through the shedding of his blood and healing through his broken body. We minister in his name. We talk about him. We brag about him! His name is always on our lips! He can save to the uttermost. He's provided forgiveness. He's provided reconciliation.

We rejoice in the ability that we have because of what he has done! He is always on our lips. We speak about him with passion and pride. We emulate him and do our absolute best to walk in his steps. We consider the things that he endured and are strengthened through his presence in our lives. We declare that we can do all things through him who is our living lord and savior.

“In Christ Jesus” when it is the proper text, means in union or identification with Christ Jesus. We rejoice in the fact that we are as he is. He became as we were so we could become as he is. That happened in our new birth. We rejoice in what he did, not what we do, because we are weak in the flesh. Therefore, we have no confidence in it. That's the next point.

Thirdly, we have no confidence in the flesh, in our natural abilities. Our strength and confidence come not from our natural ability, but from our ability to walk by the spirit. Of course, we use our natural ability and everything else we have to bring glory to God. But our performance is not the basis of our confidence. John 6:63 says, “the flesh profits nothing.”

There are many things going on in the guise of Christianity which are nothing more than having confidence in the flesh. There is a lot going on in the name of Christianity today that really has nothing to do with true Biblical Christianity. There are a lot of people deceiving and being deceived. Not every experience being promoted as being genuine really is. The truth will allow us to discern and recognize the counterfeit.

In Paul's day, people misrepresented Christianity and were promoting all kinds of stuff that he had to stand against. Why would we think that our day and time would be any different? There are no works of the flesh that are profitable for salvation. Everything we need has been totally and completely provided by Christ.

Galatians 3:2-3:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³
Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

There is nothing we can do in the flesh that will perfect us. We are already perfect spiritually. We were not saved by our good works, and we will not be brought to maturity by our own power. That's why our confidence is not in the flesh. Our confidence is in God, and we operate all the manifestations. We rejoice in what Jesus Christ did for us. His name is on our lips, and we don't have any confidence in the flesh. Paul had every reason to have confidence in the flesh, but he didn't allow himself to. That's how we are supposed to live, too.

Our confidence is in who we are in Christ. God is my Dad; Jesus Christ is my big brother; I have holy spirit power, and I'm part of the greatest family there has ever been. My confidence is knowing that God works within me to will and to do of His good pleasure. I operate the spirit to glorify Him. . . to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Do you know Philippians 4:13? Can you say it? Go ahead, say it. Great! I agree, you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you! Now, that declaration is rejoicing in Christ Jesus and having no confidence in the flesh. That declaration brings the focus where it needs to be. . . not on me and my ability, but on the Christ in me that enables me to be more than a conqueror. Remember we remain safe as we worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

We saw previously that God's portion is His people, that our heavenly Father seeks our worship, and that we are responsible to worship God in spirit and in truth. We also saw Paul warning the Philippians about the danger they are facing and prescribing what it means to be a true believer.

When we identify with Christ Jesus, we are the true circumcision. We will know that we are walking as such by worshipping by the spirit of God, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh. Let's be valiant for the truth. We will only remain safe as we allow Christ to circumcise our hearts so that we render devotion to God from a pure heart. God seeks our worship. Let's be lavish with it.

Affirmations: God is my Dad, and Jesus Christ is my big brother. I'm part of the greatest family there has ever been.

Recommended Reading: Day 29: Acts 24; Day 79: Galatians 3.

John 18:37-38: Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. 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. ³⁸ Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*.

At the end of the Gospel of John there is an intriguing encounter in which Pontius Pilate asks Jesus, “Are you a king?” Jesus essentially replied affirmatively and adds, “To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears my voice.” Then Pilate asks the question that has been asked so many times since: “What is truth?” (John 18:37-38).

The Greek word family for “truth” includes five different words. *Aletheia* is the noun truth; its related adjectives are *alethēs* and *alethinos* and they mean “true.” *Alethōs*, the adverb, means “truly.” There is also a related verb, *aletheuō*, which means to “deal truly.” They are all compound words made up of *a* - “not,” and *lanthanō* - “unnoticed” or “concealed.” Truth is not intended to be hidden. It is of great practical value and its recognition is indispensable to a successful journey through life. Truth is a central and key concept in the Gospel of John. 25 of its 44 occurrences are in the Gospel of John. It appears 32 times in the church epistles and only 7 times in the other three gospels.

Truth revolves around the nature of God and His holy will. It is revealed in both the immutable laws of nature and the God-breathed scriptures. He is the “God of truth” (Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 65:16) and that which proceeds from Him is necessarily true (Psalms 119:142, 151, 160). Indeed, it is impossible for Him to be anything other than true (cf. I Samuel 15:29; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).

Wayne Jackson suggests that it is essential to understand that the meaning of the words in this word family will vary in their emphases, depending upon their context. He notes the following 6 different shades of meaning:

1. “True” sometimes carries the meaning of *loyal*. A true friend, a true patriot, etc., is one who is faithful to a commitment. In our idiom, we have the expression “true blue.” Jesus said that those who “abide in [his] word” are “truly [alethos, adv.] disciples” that is loyal and faithful disciples (John 8:31).
2. The word “true” may be used of that which is *genuine* (as opposed to that which is phony or counterfeit). Christ affirmed that his Father, God, is “true” (John 7:28), and Paul commended the brethren at Thessalonica in that they, in their conversion, had turned away from idols to serve the “true” God (I Thessalonians 1:9; cf. Revelation 6:10).
3. “Truth” is that which conforms to *reality*. When Paul wrote to the brethren in Thessalonica, he commended them because they received his message, not as a mere human communication “but, as it is in truth [reality], the word of God” (I Thessalonians 2:13).
4. Another aspect of that which is “true” is *consistency*. Truth is harmonious. The psalmist could, therefore, say: “The sum of your word is truth. . . ” (Psalm 119:160 NASB).
5. “Truth” is that which conforms to a *standard*. Jesus taught, for instance, that God must be worshipped according to “truth” (John 4:24).
6. And then sometimes the term “truth” carries the idea of *honesty*. A person who professes to be in fellowship with God and yet persistently walks the path of spiritual darkness (thus acting the hypocrite), he is lying, and not practicing the true (or honest) life (I John 1:6; cf. Ephesians 4:25).

Loving the truth is more than just a superficial affection. It is a passionate devotion to understand and live it. Once truth has been recognized it must be believed, acted upon and incorporated into the foundation of one’s life. Truth is meant to be obeyed (Romans 2:8). Having knowledge of the truth should result in doing it (I John 2:4; 1:6). Truth is designed for transforming our lives so that they conform to the life of Jesus.

Affirmations: I love the truth. I am loyal and honest.

Recommended Reading: Day 30: I John 1; Day 80: I John 2

John 14:6:

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, [and] the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

In our lesson yesterday we looked at Pilate's question, "What is truth?" However, when he asked the question, he was not aware that the truth was standing before him, looking him in the eye. He didn't know that truth could be found in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus boldly declared to his disciples that he was "the way, and the truth, and the life" and that no one comes to the Father except through him." John 1:14, speaking of Jesus, says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." In Jesus, the truth took on human nature.

The "I am" saying of Jesus in today's lesson certainly ranks among the most well-known statements of our Lord. It appears in what has been called Jesus' "Farewell Discourse." Jesus delivered it on the eve of his arrest, torture and crucifixion. After telling them of his imminent departure, he adds, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (John 14:4). Thomas, perplexed, responds, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (John 14:6). Jesus' response was singular and pointed regarding the way after which Thomas inquired. Bullinger acknowledges it as a *hendiadys* in which three things are said and one thing is meant.

The Greek texts add an "and" between "way" and "truth." We should understand the statement to mean: "I am the way, yes—the true and living way; for no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Of course, Jesus is the truth (Matthew 22:16) and the life (John 11:25), but the context clearly shows that the subject of Thomas' question is "the way." The other two nouns, "the truth" and "the life," are used to define the nature and character of the way about which Thomas inquired.

"Truth" and "life" are central to the message of the gospel of John. "Truth" is used in John 25 times and only 7 times in the other gospels. Jesus is the source and teacher of truth (Matthew 22:16; Mark 12:14; John 1:14,17), and that truth sets people free (John 8:32-38). "Life," *zoē*, is used 38 times in John and only 17 times in the three other gospels. This life that Jesus gives is what sustains us (John 6:27).

This "I am" statement is very similar to Jesus' claim to be the Door of the Sheep in John 10:7-9. There is only one God, and He has only one kingdom with only one entrance—Jesus Christ. Jesus used the definite article to distinguish Himself as "the way." Although there are other ways (like the way of Balaam [II Peter 2:15] and the way of Cain [Jude 11]), Jesus is the only true and living way.

A "way" is a path or route, and the disciples had expressed their confusion about where he was going and how they could follow. He clearly declared that there was no other way to the Father (vs 6) and his Father's house (vss 2-3). Peter reiterated this same truth years later to the rulers in Jerusalem, saying about Jesus, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The exclusive nature of the only path to salvation is expressed in the words "I am the way."

Jesus was clear: there is only one way, and he is it. This belief is not popular in our culture; it is not politically correct. Tolerance is the rule of the day, and diversity is mandated, expected and allowed. Now, God does allow us to do anything we like. However, man's efforts always fall short. That's why God made a way that bypasses our work and accepts the reconciliatory and substitutional work of Jesus on our behalf. God is reaching out to us in Jesus Christ. We know that Scripture says that God's gift of salvation through Jesus was GOD-given (John 3:16), GOD-empowered (John 1:12), and GOD-originated (II Timothy 1:9).

God supplied the sacrifice that He Himself demanded by sending His only Son to die for us. Christianity affirms this fact then, that our salvation is a result not of what we do, but of our faith in what Christ has done for us. When Jesus said, "It is finished" love's redeeming work was DONE! It is important to note that Jesus said "it is finished," not "I am finished." Yes, our redemption was finished, but he was not. He is still the true and living way, and he was just getting started.

As the true and living way, he is the only way to God (Matthew 7:14; John 10:1,7,9; 14:6). Through him God has made a way to escape (I Corinthians 10:13). Jesus has provided the way into the holiest (Hebrews 9:8-15; 10:19) and the new and living way (Hebrews 10:20). His teaching distinguishes the way of truth (II Peter 2:2), the right way (II Peter 2:15) and the way of righteousness (II Peter 2:21; I Corinthians 1:30).

Affirmations: Jesus is my true and living way. The truth provides a way for me.

Recommended Reading: Day 31: John 13; Day 81: John 14.

John 4:23:

But the hour cometh, and now is [on its way], when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth [truly by the spirit]: for the Father **seeketh** such to worship him.

Our relationship with God has at its very core a heart of worship, reverence, respect and awe. We serve an awesome God Who is worthy of our worship and praise. We were designed by our Creator to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Ephesians 1:18 says “God’s inheritance is in the saints.” Part of that inheritance is our worship. Deuteronomy 32:9 says, “The Lord’s portion is His people.” Out of all creation where does God get His portion? It comes from His people. Everything else in creation is for us. The sunsets, the beauty of creation, the greatness of animal life, the vastness of the universe are all for us. He did it, and I’m sure He’s blessed to see His handiwork, but what He gets back for everything He has done is what we, His people, give Him. . . our worship, our reverence, our awe. It is such a marvelous privilege that we can do that. . . to give back to Him, Who has given so much to us. He longs for and desires our worship for He knows how profitable it will be for us. We will find our greatest fulfillment in fulfilling our purpose to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

He planned for us in this day and time of the mystery. He looked forward to us. He kept us a secret so nothing would stop us from living out His plan and dream for our lives. He infused us with holy spirit so that right now, in this very day and time, we can live by that spirit and we can give Him the true worship He deserves. . . the worship He desires and waited so long for. He waited from before the foundation of the world until the Day of Pentecost, to receive what we can give. He anticipated it. He kept it a secret. Nothing was going to mess up His plan. Now we are living in a day and time when that plan has been realized. We are living in a day and time when our relationship with Him can be so rich, so full, so vibrant.

What a privilege it is to live in a day and time like this. Each one of us with Christ in us. . . Each one of us with a direct connection with our heavenly Father. . . Each one of us able to climb into Daddy’s lap and commune with Him. . . He wants a relationship with each one of us, and He sees us as His treasure, His masterpiece. The great mystery is not lived out in formulas or with rules and regulations. It is lived and enjoyed as a family with our heavenly Father; the One Who loves us so dearly.

When talking to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, Jesus made an earthshaking statement. This momentous statement was of enormous importance or consequence for it displayed the heart of our heavenly father in a very significant way.

If we want to be true worshippers, we must worship God in spirit and in truth. Hebrews 11:6 and so many other scriptures speak about us seeking God and how He rewards our efforts to do so. Well, this week I spend time searching for what God seeks. I checked the entire New Testament in the KJV, NIV and ASV and John 4:23 is the only verse I found that specifies what God seeks. God seeks “such to worship Him.” He seeks believers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. There is another verse, John 8:50, in which Jesus says, “there is one (referring to God) that seeketh and judgeth.” Yes, God does seek and judge, and what He seeks is for people to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

God wants our total devotion; He wants to be worshipped as one should worship God with every ounce of their being. He wants complete devotion to Him. He wants nothing else to come before Him. He wants us to directly and personally worship Him in spirit and in truth, and He has given us the means to do it.

We know the phrase “in spirit and in truth” is the figure of speech hendiadys. It is used when two things are said, but one thing is meant. He wants us to worship Him truly by spirit. The only true worship is by spirit. The reason it is expressed in this way is because it requires both elements. Without both “spirit” and “truth” we will never be able to be true worshippers.

We need spirit because it is the avenue through which we worship Him. But we also need truth, for without it we will not know Who it is we worship. If we do not know the truth about Him, we will not be able to worship Him truly. We may worship what we think He is or something we imagine Him to be, but only the truth will set us free to worship Him as He really is. Only the truth will allow us to acknowledge His magnificence and render true worship.

Affirmations: I worship God in spirit and in truth. I appreciate all the benefits of speaking in tongues.

Recommended Reading: Day 32: John 4; Day 82: Deuteronomy 32.

John 4:24:

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

God wants us to know Him because if we know Him, we will love Him. He wants us to understand His great love, power and majesty. He wants us to know His great care for us as a loving heavenly Father. He wants us to know what He has done for us because if we do; **if we do...** we'll love and worship Him for it. We should adore Him. If we don't, we must not know how magnificently awesome He really is. He is worthy of our complete love and devotion. He deserves our true worship.

“**Must**” means there is no other alternative. True worshippers worship in spirit and in truth. After Pentecost, this would be available. It had been on its way from before the foundation of the world. He saw us back then and waited from before the foundation of the world until the Day of Pentecost to receive what He so longed for. He is still seeking our love and worship, we should freely, graciously and lavishly bestow it.

Part of the reason we get the spirit is so that we can give back to God that which He seeks. He gave His son to make this opportunity available to us. God paid an awesome price so we could do so.

In the Old Testament, not all the children of Israel had holy spirit. They were, with the exception of certain individuals who had spirit upon them, natural men of body and soul. They could not worship in spirit and in truth. They obeyed all the external forms of worship that God prescribed to show their reverence for Him. They had no other means available to do so.

You and I today do not have to jump through those legalistic hoops. We do not have to do all the different things they were responsible to do. Our responsibility is very simple. We show our reverence by our obedience to worship God in spirit and in truth. We obey and use the gift to walk by the spirit. All we have to do is worship God in spirit and in truth.

God created spirit within us as incorruptible seed. We will never lose it; it will never decay or die; it will never alter or fade; it will never wear out. We don't even have to replace batteries. Not only did He give it to us, He also allows us to operate it by our freedom of will, at our own discretion. He allows us to decide how much worship we give Him and how much thanks we want to give Him. Whenever we want, we can use it. Whenever I want, I can give thanks well. I can speak of His mighty works. I can magnify Him. I can offer perfect praise. How? Simply by speaking in tongues, by worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. All the manifestations are involved in worship, but speaking in tongues is the one we can operate at any time. It's totally at our discretion.

God was involved in their praise in the Old Testament. He gave revelation to David and others who wrote it in Psalms and the people sang it back to Him in songs of praise. Now He gives us the words personally and specifically whenever we choose to do so. Whenever we want to worship Him in spirit and in truth, He provides the words, He gives the meaning and the substance to our hearts' desire so we can express ourselves to Him. So, we can express our thankfulness, our adoration, our praise, our awesome respect, our love, our worship. He gives us the words to say. We can communicate to Him; we can express the deepest longings of our hearts.

Just so we know He is always present and we are always God-connected, He allows us to determine when and where and how much and how often. It's all up to us. He still wants to be actively involved in our prayer and praise. Think about it! He is always there, energizing manifestations of holy spirit. We are always God-connected. Although He allows us to determine *when, where, how much and how often*, there is never any condemnation associated with the amount, even though we know we could do more. He equipped us, and He trusts us to use the spirit for our common good.

Speaking in tongues is the external or outward manifestation in the senses realm that gives testimony to the internal reality and presence of the power of the holy spirit. Whenever we need a reminder of His presence or a demonstration of His power, we can speak in tongues. God gave it to us so we can give back to Him. He wants us to use the spirit He has given us to give Him the love and worship He longs for. Not only did He make it available; we get rewards for doing it. He just heaps blessing upon blessing. When we operate the spirit, we lay up rewards in eternity. This is a win/win situation that can continue as long as we desire.

Affirmations: I am lavish with my praise and worship. I am so thankful for God's goodness.

Recommended Reading: Day 33: John 4; Day 83: Romans 8.

II Timothy 2:15:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Bible reading and Bible study are both important. Don't forsake one for the other. I've found Bible reading personally beneficial for quieting, comforting, refreshing and strengthening me. I've also found Bible study beneficial for thinking, adventure, assurance, and fearlessness. Both grow my relationship with God. . . reading engenders humility and obedience and studying facilitates honesty and integrity.

Paul was talking about reading and the mystery in Ephesians 3:4. Do you remember what he said? He said, "when ye read, ye may [What?] **understand** my knowledge in the mystery of Christ. We read so we can understand. The word read in Greek is *anaginōskō*. It's a compound word of *ana*, meaning up or again, and *ginōskō*, meaning learn by experience by an exertion of effort. When we read we put forth the effort to know it again and again.

According to II Timothy 2:15 we study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. We study because we want to be right. We want to be sure, so we put in the extra effort and study. We are diligent. We use our time wisely. We just keep going at it until we are sure. Proverbs 15:28 says, "the heart of the righteous studieth to answer. . . ." When you want to be sure and ready to answer properly you study.

Early on, I learned that there is no substitute for God's Word. It takes both reading and studying. There is no way to develop my relationship with God without a relationship with His Word. There is no way to know God's will for my life without knowing what He declared in His written Word. God's Word establishes God's will and teaches how to develop our intimacy with God.

Over my 70 years, I have enjoyed many life-changing moments. One of the earliest was learning that the Bible was the revealed Word and will of God. The simple phrase "*the Word of God is the will of God*" came to represent and reinforce the truth that the only way to consistently know the will of God was by knowing the Word of God.

Understanding that God communicated Himself to mankind through the Word of God provides a firm foundation for life. For those valiant for the truth, God's Word provides a safe anchorage in the sea of speculation and certainty in the midst of the uncertainty of our times. It seems as I have gotten older that the adversary has mounted an ever-escalating attack on the truth. He wants us to think that there is nothing absolute. . . that there is nothing worthy of our trust. . . that there is nothing about God upon which we can rely.

Well, that's why God had His Word written. So we can trust it. So we can count on it. So we can rely upon it. If He didn't mean it, He wouldn't have said it. He knows what He's doing, and He wants us to know Him. The Creator of the universe wants a relationship with us. He wants us to know Him as a wonderful, loving heavenly Father. The Lord God Almighty wants to walk and talk with each of us.

The relationship He had with His only begotten Son Jesus Christ is available to us. That's why Ephesians 1:3 uses the phrase, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It's used to establish a standard of what a Father/son relationship should be. That's what God wants to have with us. The relationship He had and has with Jesus Christ is also available to us. Ephesians 3:14 goes on to repeat a second time that God is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then Ephesians 4:6 adds that He is "God and Father of all." Do we want what's available? Do we dare take God at His Word? God's Word establishes what's available. The question that remains is, "Do we want it?" Are we passionate enough about the things of God to allow Him to make them a reality in our lives? Those who are valiant for the truth are.

The integrity of God's Word is constantly under attack from many sources. We must fight to maintain the integrity of God's Word as the foundation of our lives. The battle for our hearts is fought in our minds, and the only way to secure a beachhead is to constantly affirm and reaffirm that the Word of God is the will of God. The Word of God is true and will endure any onslaught against it.

Affirmations: I love to read and study the Bible. I am an unashamed workman.

Recommended Reading: Day 34: II Timothy 2; Day 84: Proverbs 15.

Psalm 119:89: LAMED

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

Martin Luther certainly understood the Bible was the living word of a living God. He said, “The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me. The Bible is not antique or modern. It is eternal.” We have an eternal Word that is settled in heaven.

In Psalm 119:89 we find the psalmist speaking to God about His Word. We see that he is very touched by what he is saying. The “O” shows passion and emotional investment in the declaration. What he has learned has touched him deeply and he declares it unto God with thankfulness and gratitude that appreciates the lesson. “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”

He is touched by the three things he affirms. It continues forever; it’s God’s Word; it is settled in heaven.

The psalmist recognized the Word as distinct and very special. It was “Thy” word, the Word of the Lord. There is a reverence that flows from the acknowledgment that it originated and proceeded from God. Although we may tend to take this for granted, it is crucial to acknowledge that the Bible is God’s Word. The psalmist uses the singular “word,” not the plural “words.” The difference is important. He says “thy word” is settled, not “thy words” are settled. The plural would not be wrong. It is perfectly appropriate to speak of the “words” of God. But here the Psalmist uses the singular to declare the essential unity of Holy Scripture. All that God has said, every verse and every word from Genesis to Revelation, is God’s “word” to us.

Furthermore, this Word is “settled” which is the Hebrew *natsab*. This is the only place it is translated settled. It is usually translated “stand.” The Word stands! This is the only occurrence of *natsab* in Psalm 119. It doesn’t matter what men think about it or say about it. The Word stands. It is everlasting, immutable, and infinite in its perfection.

The word “settled” means to be firmly fixed so that an object cannot be moved. Nothing that happens on earth can change God’s Word in heaven. This point gains relevance when you consider that we live in an unsettled world. No wonder many people have unsettled hearts. Even in the best of times, things change all around us. The one thing that never changes is God’s Word. God’s Word does not change because it is settled in heaven.

Some people think the Bible is too outdated to be useful in dealing with the complexities of modern life, but they are wrong. God’s truth is the same today as when it was first written. Nothing has changed since the days of the New Testament. We don’t need new truth, we only need to believe and obey the old truth, the eternal truth. God’s Word isn’t new or old. It’s eternal.

We don’t have to ask, “Is adultery wrong?” God settled that question when He had His Word written. And contrary to what we hear in the media today, we don’t have to wonder, “Is homosexuality okay?” God spoke definitively on that issue in the Bible. Homosexuality is wrong because God said it is wrong. It’s always wrong, in every form and in every manifestation. Ten thousand Gallup Polls cannot change that fact. Neither are we free to pick and choose the parts we personally like. It is all God’s Word in its entirety.

Luke 4:4: And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

We still love and extend our hands to help everyone. Adultery, homosexuality, it doesn’t matter what the misbehavior is, God’s Word still has answers and so will we if we read and study and know what it says. Jesus said in John 10:35 that the scripture cannot be broken. People will only break themselves upon it.

Psalm 119, the great acrostic Psalm of God’s Word, speaks directly to the unchanging nature of the truth. As we read, verse 89 says, “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” Verse 152 says, “Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.” Verse 160 says, “Thy word is true *from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever.” This same assurance is given by Psalms 111:7-8 which says, “The works of his hands *are* verity and judgment; all his commandments *are* sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, *and are* done in truth and uprightness.” Jesus using one of those “verily I say unto you” statements for emphasis, said in Matthew 5:18, “For, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” What a sure foundation we have been provided for our lives.

Affirmations: I live by every word of God. The Bible is alive, and it speaks to me.

Recommended Reading: Day 35: Psalms 119; Day 85: Luke 4.

Proverbs 30:5-6: Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. ⁶ The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Psalm 18:30: *As for* God, his way *is* perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.

Those valiant for the truth trust God and take Him at His Word. They realize God's Word is not bound, and it will prevail. They may suffer trouble as an evil-doer, but they enjoy the mighty Word of God growing and prevailing in their lives (Acts 19:20).

II Timothy 2:9: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

The word of God is not bound, but we are. We are bound to the word of God and to preaching what the Bible says. There are few things that delight me more than declaring what I see in the Bible. I love it. I savor it. The Bible is the only completely true book in the world. It is inspired by God. Rightly divided, which means both rightly understood and followed, it will make God known.

Hebrews 4:12: For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Bible tethers us to reality. We are not free to think and speak whatever might enter our minds. We have a duty of disciplined thinking. We are responsible to know and do the will of God which requires that we know and obey the Word of God.

I'd like to close today's lesson with a daily devotion I received from The Institute for Creation Research, February 25, 2012, entitled, *Death in the Pot*. To get the full impact of the devotion please read II Kings 4:38-44.

II Kings 4:40

So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

"The "sons of the prophets" studying under Elisha became hungry, so Elisha told them to "seethe pottage" (v. 38), evidently a soup primarily made of lentils. However, one of the young students proceeded to gather some wild gourds and grind them into the pottage, carelessly assuming that their attractive appearance and taste would spice up the otherwise dull meal. When the more mature students took the first sip, however, they realized the alien ingredient was poisonous, and cried out, "There is death in the pot!"

There is a parable in this experience. Modern Bible scholars often want to spice up the old truths of Scripture with some new and superficially attractive concoction from the outside world, but this usually serves merely to adulterate "the sincere milk of the word" (I Peter 2:2) and insert "death in the pot." Like the woman in the New Testament parable who took leaven and secretly "hid [it] in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13:33), Elisha's enterprising young student slipped in his attractive ingredient, and it soon permeated the whole pot of soup with its poison. This is the way with false doctrine.

The remedy for the poison in the pottage was found when Elisha said, "Bring meal. And he cast it into the pot. . . . And there was no harm in the pot" (II Kings 4:41). The purifying "meal" was fine wheat flour, always in Scripture symbolizing the true Word of God. It is the Word which is the true bread by which man must live (Matthew 4:4), and the antidote for the poisonous doctrines of the world must always be the unadulterated Word of God."

Affirmations: I live by every word of God. The Bible is alive, and it speaks to me.

Recommended Reading: Day 36: II Kings 4; Day 86: Proverbs 30.

Ephesians 4:15:

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

We prepare ourselves to speak because we know God is going to open doors to do so. The Apostle Paul took advantage of the many opportunities he had to speak God's Word. He prepared himself and was ready when the opportunities arose. He told the Romans.

Romans 1:15:

So, as much as in me is, I am ready [*prothumos*] to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Paul was *prothumos* [ready and willing] to preach the gospel because he understood the "good news" and knew what it had done for him and would do for "every one that believeth" as it said in verse 16. It's the power of God unto salvation, wholeness in every category of life. Peter also encouraged us to be ready to speak.

I Peter 3:15:

But sanctify the Lord God [The critical Greek texts read, *the lord Christ.*] in your hearts: [Do you see your heart as a sanctuary for God and His son Jesus Christ?] and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

We are different from most of the world because we have hope. The power of God has changed us. Right in the middle of the context on the hope in II Corinthians 4:13, Paul quoting Psalms 116:10 says, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." We speak because we believe this Word of God is true. That's why we devour it like Jeremiah did. We can't get enough of it.

Jeremiah 15:16:

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Matthew 12:34 says, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If you put an "abundance" of the Word in your heart, you will inevitably bubble up all over people with it. That's part of the preparation. Then, we reach out with the truth of God's Word being dynamic witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Share what you know from God's Word and what God has done for you. You have earned the right to tell your own story like no one else can.

Psalms 107:2:

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;

We are redeemed, and we should say so. We have been redeemed from the hand of the enemy and our bold declaration of it is a reminder of our deliverance and his doom. We should talk about the greatness of God all the time.

Psalms 66:16:

Come and hear, all ye that fear [reverence] God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

I love to declare the great things God has done for me. God gave me a wonderful wife. I have 6 great kids. Each one of us has experienced miraculous healings. We have had our lives touched by God in so many ways. We're peaceful; we're prosperous; we're healthy. God has opened up so many doors for us. He has allowed us to touch the lives of so many people. He's done wonders for my soul.

Affirmations: I am ready to preach the gospel. I sanctify the Lord in my heart.

Recommended Reading: Day 37: I Peter 3; Day 87: Psalms 107.

Mark 16:15-20: And he [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. ¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ [If] They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. ¹⁹ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

Jesus instructed his followers to speak. He knew that God would uphold the truth of His Word wherever it is spoken. We work with God as fellowlaborers. He confirms the Words we speak with signs, miracles and wonders. We are life-savers. When we speak, people turn from darkness unto light and from the power of Satan unto God.

Acts 1:8: But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

These people had been behind closed doors for fear of the Jews; they were intimidated (John 20:19). But Jesus tells them they were going to be witnesses right there in Jerusalem before they moved out to the uttermost part of the earth. Like them, the reason we received the power from on high was to be witnesses. So, let's get witnessing by operating that power. The first-century church moved dynamically for they could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20). What have we seen and heard? Let's talk about it.

In Acts 5:20 the apostles were told to "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." God can be as specific with us as He was with them. When we determine to tell our story, He can direct us to the people and the places where we should go. When we get there, what do we do? We speak with a purpose. When Paul told his story, he talked about it.

Acts 26:18: To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

What a message we have to give! The story we tell isn't a Shakespearean tragedy. It's not a fairy tale. It's a non-fiction account of God working in the lives of His people. We direct our hearts to him because we know what He can do.

Romans 16:25: Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

God can establish us. The gospel, the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the mystery, is the most amazing and marvelous story ever written, and we have the privilege to make it known, to speak as Ambassadors for Christ.

II Corinthians 5:18-20: And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

What did Christ do while he was here on the earth? Well, we are supposed to walk in his steps. We minister in his stead. He is in us, and we reconcile men and women back to God through the power of the risen Christ.

Ephesians 6:19-20: And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We pray for each other and our outreach efforts. That's one of the highlights of MFC, the camaraderie that comes from praying for one another and being in it together. Paul asked for prayer so that he would speak boldly, as he ought to speak. We ought to speak in the same way, and we also solicit your prayers.

Philippians 2:16: Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

Those are two main reasons for holding forth the Word of Life: #1 So that we will rejoice in the day of Christ. And #2 so our lives have meaning and purpose. So, we don't waste our time or labor in vain.

II Timothy 2:2: And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

We are faithful men who teach other faithful men. God wants us to have an impact on this world.

Affirmations: God upholds the truth I speak. God has established me in the gospel.

Recommended Reading: Day 38: Mark 16; Day 88: Acts 1.

Isaiah 55:11:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Let's tell our story!

- 1) What was our life like before we made Christ our lord?
- 2) How did we come to know God and His Son, our lord Jesus Christ?
- 3) What has our life been like since we made Jesus Christ our lord?

These are things many are hungering to know. We should be led to Christ. We should lead others to Christ. We should also teach others how to lead others to Christ.

Let's be *prothumos* and preach provocatively knowing that God's Word never returns void. Sometimes when I share the Word of God with someone, it seems from all outward appearances that the person is totally uninterested in what is being said. There have been times when they act as though they couldn't care less about what I'm saying. They look as though they're thinking, "I don't want to hear this." but I remind myself that I never really know what's happening in a person's heart. I simply remind myself that the Word of God never returns void.

My job is to plant and water, God is the One Who gives the increase. His Word has power in and of itself. It accomplishes what God wants. The power is in the seed, the Word of God; I simply have to sow it.

In the parable of the sower in Mark 4:3-20 the seed falls on four types of ground. Some seed falls by the wayside (i.e. on the path) and is eaten up by the birds. Some fall on stony ground where there wasn't much earth. Although it springs up, it soon dies for lack of soil. Some fall among thorns which later choke out the young plants which sprouted up. Finally, some fall on good ground, grow up, and produce abundantly. When Jesus explained the parable to his disciples, he said that the seed represented the Word and the different types of soil represented the hearts of those who hear the Word preached.

Note carefully, that the seed always reached the ground. Regardless of the kind of ground in which it was sown, the Word did what it was supposed to do. It reached the heart. Some of the hearts were so hard that the Word did not penetrate but sat on the surface only to be eaten by the birds. Other hearts were so shallow that the rootless seed withered away when the sun beat upon it. Yet, still, other hearts allowed the cares of the world to choke it and it yielded no fruit. The last kind of heart was "good" and received the Word and yielded fruit.

I just want you to notice that in every case when the Word was shared—regardless of whether they had no root in themselves, or whether it was stony ground, or thorny ground, or good ground—the Word did what it was designed to do: it reached the ground.

Regardless of the appearance of the folks we talk to, you can be assured that the Word of God always reaches the heart. Once the Word is released from your mouth, it will touch the heart, as surely as a sown seed will fall to the earth. That's part of the miraculous power of God's Word. Not only does it reach the heart; it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12: For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Never forget that the seed you sow has an effect and accomplishes its purpose. Regardless of how people may react, God's Word never returns void. I rejoice in what the Word says and believe that the seed I sow will lodge in the heart of the one to whom I speak.

Affirmations: I gladly tell my story. The seed I sow has an effect and accomplishes its purpose.

Recommended Reading: Day 39: Hebrews 4; Day 89: Mark 4.

Matthew 13:24:

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

Archeologists have discovered seeds in some of the ancient Egyptian pyramids, seeds that are thousands of years old. These seeds, when sown and watered still grow. Those amazing little things have some real staying power. Seeds blown into the highway can be found to sprout and grow in cracks in the concrete along our busy interstates. If natural seeds have such a “will” to grow, what kind of “determination” do you think the seed of the Word of God has?

Hearts change. Those who are hardhearted now may, at a later time, plow up the ground of their heart. People choked by the cares of the world now may later find their hearts crying out to God amidst all the cares and commotions they face. The Word you plant now may be watered later and may yield its abundance further down the road. God’s Word will not return void but will accomplish that which God pleases. Just remember that you are a laborer together with Him. Do your part — He will do His.

Only God knows people’s hearts. Since we do not, we will talk to anybody. Regardless of what we see with our five senses, we continue to speak God’s Word. Jesus said in John 8:31 & 32, “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.” Continuing is a big deal. Paul said to Agrippa in Acts 26:22, “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:”

What a great thing for every one of us to be able to say, “I have obtained help of God and continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great.” We talk to anybody. Isaiah 6:8 records that when God asked, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah answered, “Here am I; send me.” Let’s respond like Isaiah did.

Let me share a little story I’m fond of. It’s about four people. Maybe you know them.

THIS IS A LITTLE STORY ABOUT FOUR PEOPLE NAMED EVERYBODY, SOMEBODY, ANYBODY, AND NOBODY. THERE WAS AN IMPORTANT JOB TO BE DONE AND EVERYBODY WAS SURE THAT SOMEBODY WOULD DO IT. ANYBODY COULD HAVE DONE IT, BUT NOBODY DID IT. SOMEBODY GOT ANGRY ABOUT THAT BECAUSE IT WAS EVERYBODY’S JOB. EVERYBODY THOUGHT THAT ANYBODY COULD DO IT, BUT NOBODY REALIZED THAT EVERYBODY WOULDN’T DO IT. IT ENDED UP THAT EVERYBODY BLAMED SOMEBODY WHEN NOBODY DID WHAT ANYBODY COULD HAVE DONE. AT LAST REPORT, THREE OF THE FOUR MEN WERE STILL ARGUING AND NOBODY GOT THE JOB DONE.

Speaking the Word is something anybody and everybody can do. We assume that somebody will do it, but unless we do it, nobody else may. Our MFC have learned to hold themselves accountable to speak. The world may consider us nobodies, but our names have been recorded in God’s Book of Life forever. We are about our Father’s Business.

It will help us to figure out what to do with our heads to get our mouths open. Keeping our eyes and ears open will pay dividends when we decide to speak the truth in love not let things slide. Most people think that the dead aren’t dead. Most people think religious people are judgmental. The first of those conclusions (that the dead aren’t dead) isn’t correct, the second (that “religious” people are judgmental) might be. The problem with the second is that when we bring up the Bible and the things of God, people may think that we are judging or finding fault. It is important that we do not. We open our mouths with love and compassion. We never belittle anyone; we just highly promote the truth.

Affirmations: I obtain the help of God and speak to anybody about Him. I respond like Isaiah saying, “Here am I; send me.”

Recommended Reading: Day 40: John 8; Day 90: Acts 26

Matthew 5:43-44: Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.⁴⁴ **But I say unto you**, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

When Jesus was teaching the multitudes in Matthew 5, he took issue with the prevailing wisdom of his day. It doesn't matter if everyone has accepted the prevailing social or moral norms today; if it contradicts the truth of God's Word it can't be right. Like Jesus, we may need to take exception with the prevalent current morality.

Matthew 5:21a, 22a: [This is the first of 15 times Jesus said, "But I say unto you. . . ."]
Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. . . .²² But I say unto you. . . .

I have heard myself say, "I beg to differ." or "I don't agree." More recently it has become, "I don't think so!" Does God need another rose petal in heaven? **I don't think so.** Does God make you sick to keep you humble? **I don't think so!** Often, they actually respond asking, "Well, what **do** you think?" I love that open door. Then I humbly speak the truth without patronizing or condescending. I have found that a one-sentence transitional statement helps soften the blow, and when it's true I use it. I'll say, "I know how you feel; I felt the same way too, but you know what I found. . . ."

Don't be afraid to speak up. Don't be concerned with cultural norms. Don't worry about offending people, you will. Jesus was perfect, and people were offended by what he said and did. That point is moot. We speak the truth in love and let love have its perfect work.

There are many doors of utterance as we move through our days. Let's make sure we use the opportunities we get. Like Samson, we can always aggressively seek an occasion, too. Paul and his companions deliberated about where to go next to hold forth the good news. They learned the one and only good reason to not follow through with their plan. God said, "No!"

Acts 16:6,7:

Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,⁷ After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

But, they learned, as I've learned, God never nixes your plans unless He has better plans of His own.

Acts 16:9,10:

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.¹⁰ And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

We have assuredly gathered that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel. We just don't always know where or to whom. So, we do it at every opportunity, knowing that not only will we be blessed by speaking, but those to whom we speak will be blessed also.

Of course, should God tell us where and to whom we should speak; we, like Paul and his companions, would immediately endeavor to do so. You know, I have found that's the key to God telling us where and to whom we speak. The honest commitment to go, stand and speak we demonstrate is what opens the doors to that kind of revelation. Do you want it to come? Demonstrate your willingness to speak. Paul and his companions certainly did.

Affirmations: I'm not afraid to speak up. I speak the truth in love and let love have its perfect work.

Recommended Reading: Day 41: Matthew 5; Day 91: Matthew 26.

Psalms 37:21:

The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.

Fear and intimidation should never be motivation within the household of God. Freedom of will is a most solemn and sacred trust from God. We should be careful to maintain the same solemnity and reverence for freedom of will that God does. Freedom of will is as important when it comes to giving as it is in any other aspect of our lives before God.

I Chronicles 29:1-3:

Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, *is yet* young and tender, and the work *is* great: for the palace *is* not for man, but for the LORD God. [He's talking about the building of the Temple.]² Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for *things to be made* of gold, and the silver for *things* of silver, and the brass for *things* of brass, the iron for *things* of iron, and wood for *things* of wood; onyx stones, and *stones* to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.³ Moreover, because I have **set my affection to the house of my God**, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, *which* I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house [i.e. from the public or national funds],

David "set his affection" to the house of his God. Where do we set our affection? Where are our passions? Colossians 3:2 exhorts us to "set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth." We set our hearts and minds on the things of God. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Our reverence for God and His Word will not go unrewarded. Look at David's heart to build a house for his God. What if we had the same desire to build the Temple of God today? I am not talking about a building. The Temple of God is composed of all the born-again believers today. Our desire to build the body of Christ can be of the same magnitude as David's.

The body of Christ is bigger than any one organization or denomination. No one has an exclusive lock on the truth. If anyone claims it does, you can be guaranteed that it does not. Every organization believes they are right in what they do and teach. Of course, that includes us. If we do not believe what we teach and do is right, we would not teach it, and we would not do it. But we still have to maintain the humility of heart to learn more and the meekness to change when we realize that the Word of God interprets itself differently than what we had previously believed. Remember I Corinthians 8:1 says that "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

Just in case you missed it, let me say it again. Nobody has a corner on the market when it comes to truth. As workmen of the Word, we should be proud of our workmanship. Sure, we do our best to get it right, because it is God's Word. It is the living Word of a living God. Over the years as we stay faithful to the principles our workmanship should get better and better, but none of us are infallible.

We are not an exclusive club either. There are no strings attached to the Word we teach. We freely avail ourselves. Our Sunday Morning Fellowship tapes go out to anyone who wants to get them. We have no membership role. We just want to enjoy the strength within the household of God that comes from the fellowship of like-minded believers who avail themselves by their freewill. If you are lucky enough to find people like that, you will find that they are committed to each other, and they give.

David was so blessed to be part of the building of the temple back then, and we should be as excited today, too. Look at all he personally provided.

I Chronicles 29:4,5:

Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses *withal*:⁵ The gold for *things* of gold, and the silver for *things* of silver, and for all manner of work *to be made* by the hands of artificers. And **who then is willing** to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?

David set the example and people followed. He wanted to make it available for others to get involved so they could have the same joy and rejoicing that he did. He asked, "Who then is willing?" Folks it should always be by freedom of will and that is why there are blessings that come with it. When it comes to giving that's an appropriate question. "Who then is willing?"

Affirmations: I show mercy and give. I set my affection on things above.

Recommended Reading: Day 42: I Chronicles 29; Day 92: I Corinthians 8.

I Chronicles 29:6-10: Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered **willingly**,⁷ And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.⁸ And they with whom *precious* stones were found gave *them* to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.⁹ Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered **willingly**, because with perfect heart they offered **willingly** to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.¹⁰ Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed *be* thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

David set the example and people followed. He wanted to make it available for others to get involved so they could have the same joy and rejoicing that he did. David knew that the only reason that this service for the house of God happened was that God had His hand in it. God was the one who worked in people's heart so that they gave **willingly**. They built the house together with unity of purpose by the freedom of their will and God was working in them and with them. We believe the same about Christian Family Fellowship. If God has His hand in it, it will work... it will continue. If our people are blessed, they will give by their **freedom of will** and support what we do. We truly are in this thing together.

I Chronicles 29:11-14:

Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine; thine is* the kingdom, **O LORD**, and **thou** art exalted as head above all.¹² Both riches and honour *come of thee*, and **thou** reignest over all; and in **thine** hand *is* power and might; and in **thine** hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all.¹³ Now therefore, **our God**, we thank **thee**, and praise **thy** glorious name.¹⁴ But who *am I*, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so **willingly** after this sort? for all things *come of thee*, and of **thine own** have we given **thee**.

Look at the humility of mind that David maintained. He knew they were only giving back what God had given them. I know that is my heart and the heart of Christian Family Fellowship. We love God, and we are thankful for the privilege to do what we are doing. We can only give to you what God gives to us, and we humbly recognize that. We have made Jesus Christ our Lord, and we recognize his lordship. We work hard because we love God and we love His Word and we love His people. Life is too short to be fighting all the time. Let us move out with unity of purpose and move God's Word over the world.

I Chronicles 29:15-18:

For we *are* strangers before **thee**, and sojourners, as *were* all our fathers: our days on the earth *are* as a shadow, and *there is* none abiding.¹⁶ **O LORD our God**, all this store that we have prepared to build **thee** an house for **thine** holy name *cometh of thine* hand, and *is* all **thine** own.¹⁷ I know also, **my God**, that **thou** triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy **thy** people, which are present here, to offer **willingly** unto **thee**.¹⁸ **O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel**, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of **thy** people, and prepare their heart unto **thee**:

What a beautiful prayer. What a pure heart of thanksgiving David had. God prepares our hearts to do His will.

I Chronicles 29:19:

And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep **thy** commandments, **thy** testimonies, and **thy** statutes, and to do all *these things*, and to build the palace, *for* the which I have made provision.

Solomon did not start it, but he was going to have to finish it. His father had prepared him for the task and he was ready.

I Chronicles 29:20-22:

And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the **LORD your God**. And all the congregation blessed the **LORD God of their fathers**, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the **LORD**, and the king.²¹ And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the **LORD**, and offered burnt offerings unto the **LORD**, on the morrow after that day, *even* a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, *and* a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel:²² And did eat and drink before the **LORD** on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed *him* unto the **LORD** to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.

If we cannot do it with thanksgiving it is not worth the effort. God has laid a big challenge before us, but He has also equipped us for the task. We can do this thing. We can move out into the world with unity of purpose and reconcile men and women back to God. David's heart here reminds me of Paul's as he expressed it to the Thessalonians.

I Thessalonians 2:8:

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

Affirmations: I give thankfully and am blessed. I recognize that all I have comes from God.

Recommended Reading: Day 43: Proverbs 3; Day 93: I Thessalonians 2.

II Corinthians 8:7:

Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace [giving in the financial category] also.

The same kind of freewill giving we looked at in the last 2 lessons is also found in the New Testament. In II Corinthians 8 and 9, the noun *prothumia* occurs four times. It means ready and willing. It is translated “readiness” in 8:11, “willing mind” in 8:12, “ready mind” in 8:19, and “the forwardness of mind” in 9:2. These are all set in the context of sharing of our abundance in the material category. There’s no way around it. If you have passion for God and the things of God, you will give financially and support His work in the furtherance of the gospel. However, it can only be done by freewill according as one purposes in one’s heart, as it says in II Corinthians 9:7.

II Corinthians 8:7-10:

Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace [giving in the financial category] also. ⁸ I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness [*spoude*] of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. ⁹ For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. ¹⁰ And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward [willing] a year ago.

Paul is saying, “You said you wanted to do it before, so get with it.” *Git er done!* It is not enough to want to do what is right. It is not enough to intend to do what is right. We must follow through and actually do it. Once we purpose it, we have to perform it.

II Corinthians 8:11:

Now therefore perform the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness [*prothumia*] to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.

Bullinger says “to will” here in verse 11 is an idiom. It is used meaning “to wish to do anything speedily and spontaneously.” That’s not an unusual reaction when giving comes up. We all know intuitively that we must sow seed if we want increase. We respond almost immediately with, “Yes, I’m going to give.” We all know we want to do. We are even *prothumos*, passionate, to do so. However, over time that readiness and willingness can evaporate.

Often our willingness exceeds our ability. I’d like to give ten thousand dollars, but I don’t have it so I can’t give it. Don’t wait until you have ten thousand to give. Paul says to perform the doing of it, the giving, right now, *out of that which you do have*. God never expects us to give what we do not have. We should just be diligent to give what we can give right now, speedily and spontaneously as we purpose in our hearts.

II Corinthians 8:12:

For if there be first a willing [*prothumia*] mind, *it is* accepted [well-received or welcomed] according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

That’s the second time that has come up. Verse 11 said, “out of that which ye have.” Now verse 12 says, “according to that a man hath.” Then a third time to complete the thought it says, “not according to that he hath not.”

That’s also an established principle from the Old Testament. It occurs in at least two places Ezekiel 46:5 and Deuteronomy 16:17. Let’s look at the latter.

Deuteronomy 16:17:

Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.

We give as God has blessed us. This thing works because there are love and equality among God’s people. We believe God has blessed us and we give accordingly.

II Corinthians 8:13-15:

For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: ¹⁴ But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want: that there may be equality: ¹⁵ As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

That alludes to an Old Testament example of how God supplied for His people in the wilderness in Exodus 16:18.

II Corinthians 8:16-19:

But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. ¹⁷ For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. ¹⁸ And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches; ¹⁹ And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace [the love offering], which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration* of your ready mind [*prothumia*]:

The love offering that Paul and the others received and took to Jerusalem was a testimony to the ready mind of the Corinthians. They were ready and willing, and they performed what they promised.

Affirmations: I purpose, and I perform. I abound in the grace of giving.

Recommended Reading: Day 44: II Corinthians 8; Day 94: II Corinthians 9.

For the entire booklet on *prothumos* and the five vital signs of the believer, please check out Ready and Willing available online at: <http://eccff.org/victorious-christian-living>

II Corinthians 9:2,7:

For I know the forwardness of your mind [*prothumia*], for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. . . .⁷ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Paul boasted of the Corinthians' passion to give. That didn't happen initially. It developed over time. The Macedonians supported Paul in Corinth initially, and now Paul is proud to report back to the Macedonians that the Corinthians have gotten on board and are giving themselves. That's the equality he brought up before.

Chapter 8, verse 5 tells you how you should *prothumosly* purpose in your heart, and that is to first give yourself to the Lord. Then *prothumosly* share of your financial abundance. It follows like a tail on a dog. We should have a dynamic heart to give of our abundance; be it our time, talents, or material prosperity. A great motive is to HAVE so that we can GIVE.

Ephesians 4:28:

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

We all want and need to contribute to the overall good and welfare of the church. We work so we have to give. Acts repeats the truth in a similar way.

Acts 20:35:

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

We labor; we work so we can give.

Proverbs 30:8-9:

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: ⁹ Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Solomon was sure a wise man. Paul also had some sound financial instruction for Timothy.

I Timothy 6:17-19:

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;¹⁸ That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate [*koinonikos*, share fully, liberally, generously];¹⁹ Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life [Life that is life indeed.]

Even rich people can't trust in their riches. That's all temporary and transitory. We must trust in God, and that trust is demonstrated by doing good and giving to the work of the ministry. That's the only way to be secure and protected against what may come.

Luke 12:15,21:

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life [*zōē*] consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth. . . .²¹ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Are we in this for ourselves or are we in it for God? Do we lay up treasure for ourselves, or do we lay it up for God? How important it is for us to be rich toward God! When God's work is done in God's way for God's glory, it will never lack God's supply. May He continue to provide for us as we do our utmost for His glory.

Affirmations: I am a cheerful giver. I abound in the grace of giving.

Recommended Reading: Day 45: Ephesians 4; Day 95: Acts 20.

Acts 2:41-42:

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.⁴² And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship [*koinonia*], and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Koinonia is one of those Greek words that is so rich and full and varied in meaning that it can be difficult to definitively translate. It appears; 19 times in the Greek New Testament and is translated as fellowship (11 times), communion (4 times), and communication, distribution, contribution, and to communicate once. The most common reference is to people sharing in fellowship like in Acts 2:42. Even when used in this typical way, there is a deeper and broader context which refers to the sharing of experiences as varied as joy and pain and loss and gain.

However, it is what the sharing of these experiences produce that may contain the essence of what *koinonia* means. The experiences facilitate becoming united in a common cause, creating common interests and goals, and fostering a sense of camaraderie and family. The depth of this kind of “communion” or “community” creates a bond that supersedes individualism with its pride and vanity and replaces it with a sense of belonging to something – and someone – greater than oneself. . . a partnership that gives us purpose and meaning, joint participation in something with supernatural aspects, the Body of Christ, an association with God.

This fellowship allows us to forge true partnerships; fashioned through shared experiences, a shared hope, and a single-minded purpose. It all begins in a commonly shared gospel, the truth that makes known the mystery of godliness, which everyone chooses to live by. This good news transforms individuals of all kinds from all backgrounds into a family. . . a family that is about their Father’s business.

Let’s pattern our fellowship after the Biblical New Testament model. Let’s make the 21st century as exciting as the first as we extend the Book of Acts into our day and time. The greatness of the mystery teaches us that we need each other. . . with all our foibles and weirdness. . . with all our ego and pride. . . with all our doubt and uncertainty. We cannot become ourselves, who we truly are in Christ, apart from each other. We need the family of God.

I know there is a universal Body of Christ composed of all believers all around the world, but what we really need is a local fellowship. We need warm, living humanoid units, people just like us with all our imperfections, with whom to fellowship. . . with whom to unite in a common cause. . . with whom we can pursue common interests and goals, and with whom we live with a sense of camaraderie and family that breeds commitment that cannot be overcome.

Kevin Guigou in his *No Place Like Home Church* teaching series calls this *koinonia*, fellowship, life-partnering. This sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves, not just a natural family, but a supernatural family where the spirit of God lives and the power of God is demonstrated daily. It is where we continue to learn more about our Father because we see Him in the eyes and lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are, like Kevin says, seeking out fellowship that is frequent, local, intimate, scripture-based, and Christ-focused! Working *koinonia*, and *ekklesia* in the Word shows us that most occurrences are local. My fellowship with God is “local!” It’s right where I am, and it continues everywhere I go.

At the opening of the epistle to Philemon, right after the salutation, Paul tells Philemon of his thankfulness for him. This is the kind of appreciation we can and ought to have for one another. I really want to show you verse 6 which speaks directly about fellowship, but I also want to read the verses leading up to it because it demonstrates how we can develop a godly appreciation for one another that is at the very center of our fellowship.

Philemon 4-7: I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, [more literally from the Greek it would read: “I always thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers.”]⁵ Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; ⁶ That [Verse six gives the reason for the thanks.] the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. [Yes, I need to acknowledge it personally, but often without the help of my brothers and sisters I never will. This is something we help each other with.] ⁷ For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Paul’s prayer life was full of thankfulness. In reading through his prayers recorded in the New Testament today, I found 19 verses in which he specifically gives thanks (Romans 1:8; 7:25; 16:4; I Corinthians 1:4; 14:18; 15:57; II Corinthians 2:14; 8:16; 9:15; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3,12; I Thessalonians 1:2; 2:13; 3:9; II Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; II Timothy 1:3). Thanking God for people was a habit he had developed. It has certainly become one for our *Messengers For Christ*, too.

Affirmations: I love my fellowship community. I abound in giving thanks for my brethren.

Recommended Reading: Day 46: Acts 2; Day 96: Philemon.

Philemon 4:

I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, [more literally from the Greek it would read: “I always thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers.”]

The word “*always*,” in verse four, goes with the word “*thank*” not “*mention*.” The New Living Translation reads, “I always thank God when I pray for you, Philemon.” There is a discipline to remember people with thanksgiving.

The word “*my*” (when Paul says, “I always thank my God for you . . .”) indicates that it was personal and important to him. We are motivated to pray for people for whom we are thankful. He prayed for his servant-leaders and communicated with them regularly.

“*Mention*” is the Greek word, *mneia*. Here in Philemon it is a present participle meaning that it is a continuous, repetitive, or habitual action that occurs at the same time as the main verb, to thank. This is how he thanked God, he made mention of Philemon in his prayers. *Mneia* occurs seven times and is translated in the KJV as “mention” four times and “remembrance” three times. *Mneia* is one of nine Greek words related to memory or remembrance, and Vine says it is always used in connection with prayer. We’ll see how Paul habitually used a lift list and prayed for people. Remember we are looking at this in light of how it effects our fellowship with one another.

Romans 1:8-9:

First, [How’s that for a priority.] I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make [*poieō*] mention [*mneia*] of you always in my prayers;

The heart of Paul and every other servant-leader effervesces in prayer for his people. At the very heart of our spiritual service to God is habitual, fervent prayer for those whom we serve. We do it without ceasing with the spirit. The spiritual intercession that we make for God’s people is our simplest service. We do it by the spirit, unnoticed, without great fanfare, knowing that we make intercession for the saints according to the will of God in this way.

“For God is my witness,” emphasizes how earnest and serious Paul is about this. It notes a solemn oath. Similar phrases also occur in II Corinthians 1:23; Philippians 1:8; and I Thessalonians 2:5. In Romans 1:9, it calls attention to something that should not be overlooked. At the very beginning of the foundational epistle to our administration, Paul impresses on the mind of the Romans his commitment to pray for them.

I think it is important to note that Paul doesn’t simply say, “Philemon, I pray for you.” He says, “I make mention of you in my prayers.” How thankful I am for a mother who put me to bed at night and taught me to say my prayers. At that time in her life, she didn’t have a great deal of knowledge of God and His Word, but she had a great love for Him. That love did eventually motivate her to find out more about Him.

Like I said she didn’t know a lot, but we did the Lord’s prayer and the “Now I lay me....” She didn’t stop there however, we remembered everyone in our family and our extended family of grandparents and friends who was dear to us. How wonderful to learn to close out my day in prayer to God recognizing His blessing and protection.

One of the first things I learned after getting born again around the age of sixteen was to not only close my day in prayer but to also open it that way. To greet my heavenly Father with praise and thanksgiving in the morning certainly strengthens me for the day ahead. There is nothing that is going to happen that day that we cannot handle together, so I like to get that in my thinking as early as I can each day. [Our MFC are certainly learning this.]

“*Make mention*,” here in Romans 1:9 is translated from the Greek words, *poieō mneia*. It means roughly, to do a remembrance. This refers to an established habit of prayer in the spirit. I refer to it as doing my lift-list. Establishing the habit of praying by the spirit for those with whom you fellowship is vital. As believers we develop a lifestyle of prayer and pray prolifically for people and situations never forgetting those who labor together with us in the gospel.

Affirmations: I faithfully pray with a lift list. Prayer for my friends and fellowlaborers is important to me.

Recommended Reading: Day 47: Romans 1; Day 97: II Corinthians 1

Ephesians 1:16:

[I] Cease not to give thanks for you, making [*poieō*] mention [*mneia*] of you in my prayers.

The establishment of the discipline to pray facilitates the habitual remembrance that these scriptures talk about. We direct our hearts to God in prayer for those with whom we move God's Word in a daily habitual manner. Then as we go through our day, our hearts are directed to God in prayer as specific individuals and situations present themselves. God will impress people upon our hearts, and when He does, we should faithfully make intercession for them according to the will of God by speaking in tongues.

However, I believe what the Bible refers to, as *poieō mneia*, "making mention" or "doing a remembrance" is a specific commitment that people who move the Word together make to each other. It is a characteristic of the kind of fellowship that the first-century believers enjoyed. It definitely makes an impact and brings people together, building love and compassion between them.

Ephesians 1:16 (above) is the second occurrence of *mneia* and establishes this habit pattern. Faithfulness to maintain this remembrance in prayer is vital to every believer. We habitually remember people in our prayers. It helps us maintain the proper mindset. God is involved in this, and He is more concerned about their welfare than we are. When we make intercession, we do it according to the will of God, and it makes a difference. When we speak in tongues it energizes the power of God, and we get to direct this power where we want it to go. When we stay our mind on people and situations, we direct the power of God where we want it to go. This, as Ephesians 6:18 says, takes "watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." We direct the power of God to the situations and people upon whom we stay our minds. This is a service that ought not to be overlooked or neglected. It builds the sense of community of which *koinōnia* speaks.

Philippians 1:3: I thank my God upon every remembrance [*mneia*] of you,

This use of *mneia* is not accompanied by *poieō* or *echō*. It doesn't refer to doing our lift-lists, but to the discipline to pray for people as they come to our remembrance. These two types of prayer form a solid foundation upon which we can build loving, caring relationships. Our predetermined habitual prayer times, and our discipline to speak in tongues for people when God brings them to our remembrance forms the bedrock of our service to God and His people. It's at the very foundation of our fellowship.

I Thessalonians 1:2:

We give thanks to God always for you all, making [*poieō*] mention [*mneia*] of you in our prayers;

Do you see the pattern? "Thanks," "always," or "without ceasing," "making mention," "prayers." This refers again to doing our lift-lists, our habitual remembrance of those with whom we regularly fellowship.

I Thessalonians 3:6: But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance [*mneia*] of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

One of the things that Timotheus reported back to Paul was the good remembrance that the Thessalonians had for those who served them the Word of life. Like Philippians 1:3, this verse refers to the discipline to pray for those who feed us God's Word. This endears one to another. The diligence to keep one another in our prayers builds the desire to see one another and enjoy the pleasure of each other's company. This mutual prayer unites people and builds our love and compassion for each other.

There's something about prayer in the spirit. There's something about operating manifestations. When you do it God energizes. When we do something, God does something. When we operate manifestations, God is actively involved with our lives. He's given us the authority to do it at our will and directs His power wherever we need it to go.

Not only was Paul faithful to pray for Philemon, but Philemon's prayer for Paul would be instrumental in securing Paul's release from prison and facilitating them getting together soon. Toward the end of Philemon Paul also mentions Philemon's prayers for him, also. When you move the Word together, you make memories together. When you reflect back upon them, it builds love and unity between believers.

Affirmations: I faithfully pray with a lift list. Prayer for my friends and fellowlaborers is important to me.

Recommended Reading: Day 48: I Thessalonians 1; Day 98: I Thessalonians 3.

Job 20:5-7: That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? ⁶ Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; ⁷ Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?

Jeremiah told us that his countrymen used their tongues like instruments of war, bows and arrows that launched lies. What a vivid illustration of the power of words. Like deadly arrows that find their prey, the enemies of truth fire their missiles at the minds of their victims.

The effect of lies should not be underestimated. Their acceptance means the truth's rejection. When a person rejects the truth, in any measure and in any form, there are often consequences. Jeremiah indicted his countrymen for not being "valiant for the truth." They were more captivated by lies than they were by truth. There are few more demanding concerns in our day and time than this.

Being valiant for the truth does not just mean we can distinguish the truth from lies. It means we refuse to lie. We eschew falsehood and the evil it breeds in every form. Truth will always eventually prevail against lies regardless of the persuasive power behind the lies. Truth will triumph.

Paul championed the truth. He was adamant about not lying and called on God as a witness when he made that claim. Life is not a power struggle; it is a matter of truth. The only way the devil ever beats us is with lies. When we submit ourselves to God and His Word, we will always be victorious. We cannot let our allegiance to truth deteriorate.

The Word sets wonderful standards for doctrine and practice for those of us who want to be good ministers of Jesus Christ. In II Corinthians 4, Paul reminds us that he has nothing to hide, that his life and ministry is pleasing to God. So, he remains transparent and his handling of the Word of God is honest and forthright. Paul's critics accused him of dishonesty and deceitfulness in his version of the Gospel. However, Paul renounced secret, shameful and deceitful ways, because he knew the mercy of God upon his life.

The enemies of truth that opposed him were secretive, deceptive, using shameful ways, and distorting the Word of God to suit their own purposes. The subtlety of handling the Word of God deceitfully is that it uses the Word of God but corrupts it. That kind of thing has gone on through the years and is still going on today. Enemies of truth are hucksters. They use the Word of God for their own purposes, to promote their own agendas. They use people and make merchandise of them. They twist and pervert Scripture for their own end.

There is no real threat posed by those who teach something explicitly and overtly anti-biblical, anti-Christ and anti-God. The greater danger comes from subtle teaching that appears to be biblical and pulls away unwary souls from the faith. That is handling the Word of God deceitfully. On the other hand, those who preach the truth will strive to demonstrate the truth by a well-ordered life, godly character and behavior that brings glory to God. Only by the manifestation of the truth will we become powerful in advocating the truth and in giving it the sure application that God has ordained.

Satan's strategy of deception blinds men's minds. Therefore, God makes us a savor of life so the glorious gospel of Christ can still shine unto them. We are valiant for the truth upon the earth, and we engage our world and our culture heroically. We fight with prayer and spiritual weapons. We are open and honest in our own communication. We declare the good news of Jesus Christ concerning the mystery with clarity, and we love with great intensity.

It is the Word of God that we believe and the power of God that we operate that appropriates our victory over the enemies of truth. In this study, we listed and studied thirteen enemies that were associated with the Greek words *pseudos*, *heteros* and *allos*. (See page 19 for the list.)

Affirmations: I demand truth to prevail in my life. I use my words to heal and encourage.

Recommended Reading: Day 49: John 8; Day 99: I Thessalonians 3.

Colossians 4:12: ESV

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

We saw Paul valiant for the truth with the Galatians. He was so fully persuaded of the gospel he preached that he pronounced an anathema upon those who presented any other gospel. Then we saw Paul valiant for the truth with the Corinthians, where he, as a protective father of the bride, adamantly assaulted those who opposed the truth. We also saw Paul beseeching Timothy to be valiant for the truth and to keep the doctrine he taught him pure. Finally, we saw how the enemies of truth used the subterfuge of lying signs and wonders to deceive and seduce even the elect of God.

When Paul addressed the Galatians, he marveled that they had been so soon removed from the gospel. His major concern was with those who troubled the Galatians. They were the ones who perverted the gospel; they were the ones he pronounced the curse upon. Although the Galatians had been bewitched, Paul never directly addressed them as enemies of the truth.

Similarly, when Paul addressed the Corinthians, he was concerned about them being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Although Paul identified the work of the false apostles and the deceitful workers, he never included the Corinthians as being enemies themselves.

Yes, Paul warned the believers about enemies of the truth, but he never treated them as enemies. Even when it became necessary to sever fellowship with some of the believers Paul never treated them as such.

II Thessalonians 3:14-15:

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.¹⁵ Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

We never treat anyone in our believing household as an enemy. We treat them as brethren and do our best to help them, even when believers go so far as to refuse to obey the Word. The last thing we need is to go on witch hunts, pointing fingers at one another and trying to identify enemies of the truth. Within the household of faith, we instruct one another in righteousness using doctrine, reproof, and correction.

Like Paul, we operate with pure hearts and without personal agendas. That allows us to esteem one another better than ourselves. We endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We want to protect our believing household, our community of faith, from attacks from the outside. We protect ourselves from those outside and stay put on the doctrine we have received and believed. Of course, we can always learn more and change, but we are slow to change our doctrinal position because we are faithful to apply the Word we know. Furthermore, we only change with the agreement of all after taking whatever time is necessary to reach an agreement.

God needs people who are valiant for the truth. We are neither afraid of the world nor intimidated by it. It is where we live move and have our being, walking in the spirit. It is where we carry out our Father's business. We are more than conquerors because, though we are *in* the world, we are *not of* the world. Our allegiance is to God, and we dedicate our lives to Him. II Corinthians 5:15b teaches us that we should not live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. We walk in the steps of our Lord Jesus Christ; living by the faith of Jesus Christ, showing the world there is more available than what the five senses world offers them.

Affirmations: I am fully persuaded of the gospel. I am neither afraid of the world nor intimidated by it.

Recommended Reading: Day 50: II Thessalonians 3; Day 100: II & III John