

# Straight Bible Talk

Manchester Church of Christ, Share Christ's Love and Share His Message

## Important Things

October, 2008

Volume 3 Issue 10

### Truth

People are funny. Imagine going to a doctor, who after examining you said, "I feel like surgery to remove your gall bladder would be a good choice for you today."

In reply, you might say something like, "What do you mean you 'feel like.' Why do you want to take out my gall bladder?"

To which he replies, "It just feels like the right thing to do."

To me, that would be a very unsatisfactory conversation. We expect doctors to deal with facts. Sometimes, in medicine, the facts are somewhat elusive, but we want our care to be based on the best knowledge that is available to the doctor. Feelings will just not do as a diagnosis. We want the truth.

There are many areas in our lives where we are concerned about truth. At the drug store, at the bank, at the car repair shop, just to name a few places where truth matters.

Yet when it comes to the matter of religion, many people are now saying that truth does not matter. "Just give me a religion that makes me feel good." Or, "I don't care as long as it seems all right to me."

The doctor can give you a report that makes you feel good, but if it is not true, it will not be much help in curing your ailment. The bank can give you a rosy financial report, but if your account is overdrawn, the truth will finally come out.

So, the preacher, pastor, rabbi, can give you a glowing report of what lies in store for you, but if it is not true, of what value will that be for you in the day of judgment.

It is like the parents who have decided not to keep score in their kids game so no one will lose. There are still winners and losers and the kids usually know who they are. The truth is that there are winners and losers and failure to keep score does not change that truth.

Consider basketball, as another example. (I like basketball.) Sometimes there is a shot at the end of a game that affects the outcome. The game is won or lost depending upon that shot. The referees huddle around a monitor and replay it over and over to make sure the shot was taken before time expired. They are determining the truth. Nothing but truth will satisfy the fans. Only the losers do not care about the truth!

Some years ago a game was decided on an inbounds pass with less than a second remaining in the game. The ball was passed, the player took the shot, the horn sounded to end the game. His team won.

There was so much controversy that elaborate tests were conducted to see how long it took a player to catch the ball and shoot. The amount of time was determined and by today's standards the outcome of that game would be altered. Basketball officials are dedicated to getting things right. They are dedicated to the truth.

So we have a dedication to truth in sports (forget such sports as gymnastics, diving, synchronized swimming, etc. where points are awarded based on how the judges feel). We have dedication to truth in science, in medicine and a whole array of different fields.

Editor/Writer – Steve Bastin  
E-mail – [manchrist@aol.com](mailto:manchrist@aol.com)  
[manchesterchurchofchrist.org](http://manchesterchurchofchrist.org)

Manchester  
Church of Christ

Meeting at  
595 Tolland Turnpike  
Sun Bible Classes—9 AM  
Sun Worship—10 AM

Sun Eve Worship—6:00 PM  
Wed Bible Class—7:00 PM

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 17:31

All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless

All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless

595 Tolland Turnpike

But we have a seeming lack of concern for truth in matters of morals, character, eternal destiny and God. Opinions are voiced and decisions are made without any attempt to verify the quality of those opinions and choices. No one asks whether it is true. The only thing that seems to matter is whether it “feels” right.

Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Of course, saying that there is truth in religion does not make it so. The proof lies in the evidence. Many people have claimed to speak the truth about morals and values, but a claim is not proof. Others are content to merely say that their way is better than others. If there is truth then we can speak of right and wrong. If there is no truth we can only speak of better and worse, and even that is just a matter of opinion.

The Bible speaks of a final judgment. “It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Notice that there is “good” and there is “bad.” Deeds are not better or worse. Jesus spoke of his role as judge: “I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.” “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son.”

We have court trials to pass judgment. Whether it is a jury trial or a trial decided only by a judge, the standard for judging is truth. Prosecutors try to prove the truth of their charges. Defendants try to prove that the charges are false. True or false. Right or wrong. Truth is the standard for judgment. False witnesses are punished. Oaths are taken to promote the speaking of “truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” Can there be anything less than truth as a standard for judging?

When people say that there is no truth, they need to have a brain scan to see if there is anything there. What they usually mean is that there is no truth in religion. All is just a matter of opinion. That is the same as saying there is no God. “Every idea of a supreme being is just someone’s opinion.”

The true Christian is concerned with truth. That person is concerned with evidence because truth stands or falls on the basis of evidence. The replay in basketball, the multitude of tests in medicine, the chemical analysis for the druggist and the forensics of criminal investigations, all are searches for the truth.

Is Jesus the Son of God? Did he appoint apostles as his witnesses? Is their testimony consistent with the facts as we know them? Are they reliable as witnesses? Does the Bible accurately communicate what they wrote? All of

these are questions that may legitimately be asked in the search for truth in religion?

Just as the evidence in a criminal trial cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand, the evidence that exists for affirming the answers to the above questions cannot be simply dismissed without consideration. Only those who have concluded there is no truth (without examining the evidence) will refuse to consider the evidence that is available to lead us to the conclusion that Jesus spoke the truth and delivered that truth to the witnesses he chose. Yes, there is truth in religion.

## Sin

Sin is the concept that there are things that are right and there are things that are wrong. When one does the wrong, one has sinned. When one fails to do the right, again, one has sinned. The idea that there is sin rests on the foundation of truth. If there is no truth, there is no sin. Without truth, one can only speak of things that are better or worse and even those categories are subject to change and modification based on time and circumstances.

All sorts of people who are not generally identified as religious believe in the concept of sin. Those in favor of abortion speak of a woman’s right. If there is no truth there is no right. If there is no truth there can be no wrong in depriving a woman of her “right.” One can only contend for a condition in which it is “better” if a woman is allowed to choose. But that is not the way in which the debate has been presented.

On the other side, those who oppose abortion must also speak of truth as they contend that abortion is murder and murder is wrong. It is not just a worse choice, but it is set forth as a wrong choice.

Even as both sides often contend (when the subject is different) that there is no truth, they defend their position with a concept that screams “right versus wrong.” So, while there is disagreement over defining sin in the case of abortion, both sides are in agreement that there is sin.

Every society gets involved in the legislation of morals. Debates rage over what conduct is to be permitted and what conduct is to be punished. As long as we have these debates, there is the recognition that there is some conduct that is bad and must be prohibited by society as a whole. If there is no sin, then all laws regulating conduct need to be abolished. (This would include everything from traffic laws to stealing my neighbors TV.)

When one buys an automobile, the manufacturer provides a manual telling you how the car may be used and how it must be maintained. It does not label these matters as “sin” but the warranty will not be honored if the manual’s directions are not followed.

In the same way, God is our Creator and He has produced a “manual” for operation of our lives. That manual is called the Bible. It tells us how our lives must be used and it tells us how we are to care for our lives. Sin is the word that is used to describe the misuse of our lives, either by doing things we ought not do or not doing the things that we ought.

Continuing the analogy, one may misuse a car for a time without any noticeable ill-effects. Eventually that misuse will catch up with you and you will pay the consequences in breakdowns and malfunctions. The same is true with the misuse of your life. One may get away with it for a time, but eventually it will catch up with you.

With the car, the misuse may not cause a problem during your ownership of the car, but someone else will pay for that misuse. In the case of our lives, we cannot pass them on to another. We may escape the consequences in this life, but we will pay for that misuse in eternity.

Sin has consequences. When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden with instructions on how to live, He set boundaries. Those boundaries are what we have been defining as sin. When they went beyond the boundaries they suffered the consequences. Some were immediate and others lay in the future.

If one is not happy with the car and wants a different model that can be used in a different way, there are a variety of manufacturers from which one may choose. People seem to think that it is the same with God and His rules. If you do not like the rules that God makes, then choose a different god with a different set of rules. Thus you have the God of the Bible, the god of the Koran, the god of the eastern religions, and so forth. They are obviously different gods because they have different rules.

Now we have the interesting situation of people taking some of their rules from one religion, some from another and still others from a third, and so on. Which god have they chosen? In reality, they have created their own god.

When I was a boy, my brother and I owned two lawn mowers. When both of them quit working, I took them apart in the mistaken belief that I could take the good parts from each of them, put the good parts together and have a working lawn mower. The mowers were made by two different companies, so the parts were not interchangeable. I finished with a box full of parts and no operating lawn mower.

The person who thinks that he can take rules from different gods and put them together into one system that will function is dreaming. Not only are they dreaming, but they are headed for a disaster. They have ignored the true manufacturer, the God of the Bible and have introduced inferior concepts that will not work in God’s system. It matters not what one may call such a hybrid religion, the

truth is that it is an abomination to the One who created people. It is sin.

It would be comical if it were not serious, but what is one to say when churches gather in conventions to vote on what is sin and what is not? If the Bible does not define sin to our satisfaction who are we to try and improve upon what God has written? Yet that is what people have been doing for centuries.

Jesus came to reveal the truth. He said the truth would set us free. He told the truth to his generation and chose 13 men to pass that truth on to future generations.

We may find the truth that Jesus spoke to be difficult in following. We may sometimes struggle to understand Jesus’ truth. Yet it is strange, indeed, when those who call themselves followers of Jesus think that they can improve upon the truth that Jesus spoke.

When God spoke to Moses and gave him the covenant at Mt. Sinai, He cautioned him not to add to His words nor to take anything from His words so that he might keep the commandments of God. How can one take seriously the claims of Jesus and God’s declaration that “this is my beloved Son, listen to him,” and then proceed to add to his words and take away based on the pleasure of some church leader!

It is sin to break the law and do what is forbidden. It is sin to refuse to do what the law plainly requires. (This is why we file our income tax returns.) It is also sin when we set out to change the law according to our personal preferences. (Try changing the tax form to fit your idea of what is “just.”)

### **Salvation**

President Richard Nixon resigned in disgrace after his involvement in a cover-up of the Watergate break-in was discovered. Many said at the time that he could have been forgiven and remained in office if he had been forthright in admitting wrongdoing. His continued denial of responsibility contributed to his downfall.

The Old Testament tells us the story of a king who had a similar failure. Saul was sent on a mission by God through the prophet Samuel. When he returned, Samuel confronted him because the evidence was overwhelming that he had not completed his mission. Instead of admitting wrongdoing, Saul began to make excuses. His failure to admit his mistake cost him the kingdom.

American society today is involved in a radical redefinition of sin. Instead of admitting wrong, people are denying the sins that God has clearly identified. What the Bible calls sin is often declared to be righteousness. And what the Bible calls righteousness is sometimes being called sin. We live in a crazy upside down world.

God offers salvation for sinners. He does not offer salvation for those who mislabel conduct. There is no forgiveness where there is no acknowledgement of sin.

There is no sin that God will not forgive where there is true repentance. When one acknowledges wrong and turns away from that wrong, God offers His mercy and forgiveness. There is salvation for those who are willing to admit that they are wrong.

Yet even in the matter of God's salvation there are people who want to tell God when He must forgive. As with the definition of sin, there is a truth about salvation that comes from God through Jesus. It is not our decision about forgiveness that determines what God will do. God determines when He will save and when He will not.

First of all, God required a mediator. Jesus occupied that position by dying on the cross. Because of his perfect life he qualified to fill that position. He had no sin to be forgiven. His perfection made him the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Second, God requires that we use the mediator that He has provided. Jesus told the people that he was the light of the world, that his judgment is true because the Father agrees with that judgment and that he was going to the Father. Then he said, "Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins." Without Jesus to mediate between a person and God there is no forgiveness and no salvation. One must acknowledge that Jesus is lord and the one whom God has given "all authority in heaven and on earth."

Third, there must be a change of heart and mind concerning those things in which one has been wrong. The Bible calls this repentance. Jesus taught that those who will not repent "will perish." One whom Jesus chose to be his witness declared, "We ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people eve-

rywhere should repent because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead."

Fourth, there must be a baptism by the authority of Jesus. When Jesus sent his disciples out with his message he told them, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." Another of his chosen witnesses told those who sought forgiveness, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Those who accepted the message were baptized that same day, about 3000 people.

### Conclusion

Some people contend that there is no truth, but if there be no truth, there can be no sin and no salvation. There is truth and that truth was declared by Jesus. The truth will convict you of sin, but it will not leave you forsaken because the truth will also lead you to forgiveness. That forgiveness is found in God's simple plan of salvation. His forgiveness is forever.

- Please send me a free Bible
- I am interested in a Bible study program
- I am looking for a church
- Please send me a free copy of the book, "A Christian Survival Manual"
- Please add my name to receive "Straight Bible Talk" free each month
- I have a question

Manchester Church of Christ  
595 Tolland Turnpike  
Manchester, CT 06042

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Send requests/questions to: Manchester Church of Christ, 595 Tolland Turnpike, Manchester, CT 06042 or call, 860-646-2903 10/08