



The Truth Will Set You Free

³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

— John 8:32

The second half of this sentence, “*the truth will make you free*”, is quite likely the most often quoted snippet of Scripture by practically all things secular, be it film, television, literature, or especially a political speech. Hardly a week goes by that I don’t hear it proclaimed in the secular arts or media. But does **any** and **every** “truth” work to “*make you free*”? For example, Ted Bundy was a serial killer. Did that truth make you free? $4 + 4 = 8$. Did that truth make you free? Even Christians often take this out of context because they have never really considered it in its whole and given setting. Originally there were no verse or chapter markings in Scripture, so this is only truly understood in the whole sentence in which Christ presented it:

*³¹So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “**If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**”*

— John 8:31-32

The **only** truth to which this refers is the absolute, unalterable Truth of God’s Word. No other truth can “*make you free*”.

The Original Audience

Notice that Jesus did not say this to everyone. He specifically addressed “*those Jews who had believed Him*” who could only possibly qualify as “*truly disciples of Mine*” if they consistently and continually put His Word into practice. But there was a reaction by those who thought they were already following the truth and who seemed to see little or no need for following through their belief by becoming one of His disciples according to His Truth:

³³They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free?’”

— John 8:33

Jesus further enlightens them by showing that obedience to His Word was not just an issue exclusive to education, but required in order to address the greater spiritual condition of sin.

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. ³⁵The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

— John 8:34-36

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Jesus connects the dots to show the relationship between continuing in His Word so as to know and live God's truth and its ability to free such a practitioner from the greater recurring spiritual issue of sin.

We could pause here and develop an in-depth sermon on the fact that "believing" in Jesus must be followed through with a commitment to putting His Word into practice so as to not only accept the work of the cross, but going forward to properly address the persistent issue of sin. For the past 150 or so years, the term "easy-believism" and related variants has expressed this recurring problem. Many define the faith which produces salvation in Christ to needing to be nothing more than an intellectual acknowledgment of the truths of the Gospel accompanied by an appeal to Jesus for salvation even if such do not follow through with a changed life obedient to God's Word and ways. The same issue Jesus addressed with Jews at His First Coming is even more prevalent among the mostly Gentile Church in the shadow of His Second Coming, where so many believe just because they raised their hand and will even affirm their belief in Christ, such have never bothered to follow through with a commitment to His Word. They seem to think they have enough truth without fully embracing **the** Truth.

Remember, it is Jesus Himself, speaking to those "*who had believed Him*", to whom He laid down the qualification that in order to be His disciple that it depends on "*If you **continue** in My word*" so that the consistent commitment to putting it into practice will "*make you free*" from being a "*slave to sin*". His audience is not comprised of scoffers and detractors or even unbelievers, but those who have acknowledged Him and yet have not demonstrated that they will follow through on their belief with a changed, obedient life. They have heard and know the truth of the Gospel, but are not prepared to follow through with everything Jesus teaches subsequent to accepting the Gospel.

This explains much of what is taking place in the Western Church today, where so many acknowledge Christ but have not properly followed through. Instead of committing to His Word they instead cling to and substitute something else, thinking it is "Christian enough" to see them through. In fact, I would propose this is seen in the many examples where someone will acknowledge Christ as both Savior and the Son of God, and yet affirm positions which are plainly refuted in the rest of God's Word. We witness this on such issues as abortion, adultery, divorce, homosexuality, and on and on. It is especially evident in the many false movements with the Western Church proper such as Church Growth, the Emergent Church, Charismania, hyper-Calvinism, and so many other false systems which acknowledge Christ and yet ignore, twist or outright replace the rest of His teachings. In reality the results today are actually the same as they were when Jesus first made this pronouncement:

*³⁷"I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you."
— John 8:37*

They are killing off the very thing they say they believe in because, in reality, there is no tolerance for the rest of His Word. Therefore there is no further tolerance for Christ Himself.

The Desires of Your Father

³⁸"I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."

— John 8:38

The rejection of embracing and being obedient to the whole of Christ's teachings is not just a simple choice of preference, but actually working against Him in support of the spiritual opposition. Some of us get very passionate in our appeals to recognize these false movements for what they truly are because Scriptures such as this make it very clear that although the mouth attempts to affirm the priority of Christ, the follow-up actions confirm a much more sinister and dangerous source:

*⁴³"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because **you cannot hear My word.** ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵But because I speak the truth, **you do not believe Me.***

— John 8:43-45

All of the popular false movements of our time have in common a basic acknowledgment of the Gospel in that Christ is required for personal salvation, but then proceed to ignore most if not the rest of God's Word so that the net effect is that, in reality, "*you do not believe Me*"; they are actually substituting something else in His place, and that something else is the direct opposite of Christ. If it does not go through Christ alone, there is no middle ground and it is actually Satan's path that is being trod.

⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

— John 14:6

¹⁵"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

— John 14:15

But even more importantly, Jesus specifically elaborates that unless these conditions are met, there is actually no personal revelation coming to us where Christ in our personal life and faith are concerned.

*²¹"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and **I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.**"*

— John 14:21

Every false movement claims to provide some kind of special, personal disclosure of Christ which none of the others can provide, much less an orthodox scripture-based faith. The truth by which freedom from those obstacles and snares is effected comes by "*He who has My commandments and keeps them*" so as to experience Christ's personal love as He discloses more and more of Himself to us. The Gospel initiates a much deeper work.

¹Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, ²but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

— 2 Corinthians 4:1-4

Christ Himself makes it very plain as to the true condition of those who merely say they believe in Him and yet do not follow through any further:

⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

— John 8:44

Dealing with the Opposition

Because our commitment to His Word produces not only a personal, maturing relationship with Christ individually, but attainment of the scriptural discernment to see through such false teachings and the brethren in Christ who are embracing them, we might begin to view such practitioners as enemies rather than as internal opposition. Remember, Christ is addressing a category within our ranks, "*those...who had believed Him*". (Jn. 8:21) Such have a knowledge of the right path and yet fail to follow through as required, but they are not necessarily our enemies just because they stand in opposition to what we know to be the biblical truth of their beliefs and condition. In such cases, we do not have a license to employ the truth in any fashion we desire.

²⁴The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

— 2 Timothy 2:24-26

This is where it becomes tricky for those following through their acceptance of Christ as Savior with relentless obedience to the whole of His Word: the Truth must **still** be applied with love. Whereas too many are actually quarrelsome to the point of foregoing all kindness, patience and gentleness, we often lose sight that our goal is "*repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth*" so as to escape that to which they've become enslaved. We're supposed to teach and lead—actions which require the application of biblical love on a personal level, rather than ending our efforts with just a statement of the truth, far too often so loud and assertive as to be anything but kind, patient, and an opportunity to teach and lead.

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In fact, in this age of all things Internet, it revisits a problem on which the Apostle Paul specifically elaborated, that when it comes to how Christians treat each other, the application of all truth and nothing but the truth in and of itself becomes detrimental to both parties.

Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.
— 1 Corinthians 8:1b

Time and time again I have seen this not just in too many Internet venues and pulpits, but even at the individual level. Someone believing to be empowered by the truth—and often it actually **IS** the biblical truth, takes this as a license to repeatedly batter the opposition with not the slightest evidence of love or consideration for the opposition. The way they choose to handle the truth ends up working against them personally as arrogance becomes their chief personality trait. And in Paul’s discussion of this, shows that it even produces the opposite desired result in the other party.

¹²And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.
— 1 Corinthians 8:12

²If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
— 1 Corinthians 13:2

The Truth does not license a loophole exempting us from applying the knowledge it provides as simply Truth alone, but must be presented in an honest effort of sincerity and love for its target. We are not allowed to forego our own behavior and personal interest in the party we’re trying to reach and simply brandish the Truth as our sole weapon. And indeed, it actually **does** become a weapon in such cases which produces mutual harm rather than leading a brother or sister to the needed path of repentance and a return to His Word.

*¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, **being rooted and grounded in love**, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to **know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge**, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*
— Ephesians 3:14-19

Yes, “the truth will make you free” (Jn. 8:12)—that is, only the Truth of God’s Word, but in the process it is supposed to not just adjust our thinking away from the world and its ways, but result in our changed behavior when it comes to handling the Truth in all of our relationships, even with the opposition. In fact, it is supposed combine into the greater change which comes from our love of Christ as expressed in our application of such knowledge as we attempt to gently and patiently set the opposition back on the right path.

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*¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body **for the building up of itself in love.***

— Ephesians 4:14-16

There is no biblical case that can be made when it comes to our communication with the believers who are nonetheless in opposition to the whole truth of God's Word and ways that justifies we can forego everything else and exclusively rely on truth as our sole medium.

In Him,

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