

## **The Truth Sometimes Hurts**

How much do you appreciate the truth? The truth is easy to hear when it is flattering, encouraging and uplifting. However, the truth can sometimes hurt. Do you always desire the truth from those around you, regardless of whether it is favorable or not? Do you always demand the truth from those who preach and teach the gospel of Christ?

The truth pleased the rich young ruler until Jesus told him the one thing he lacked (Mark 10:17-22). Some would call such a declaration of truth unloving, but the Spirit called it love (note verse 21). How do we feel when someone courageously and honestly points out our shortcomings (Prov. 27:6)?

Some of the Jews who heard Peter on Pentecost appreciated the truth, though it indicted them. They chose repentance and baptism (Acts 2:36-40). Whereas, those Jews who heard Stephen speak that same truth hated what was spoken. They responded by stoning Stephen to death (Acts 7:54-60). How do we respond to the truth?

The Galatians loved the apostle Paul—so much that at one point they were willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to Paul. However, in the very next verse, Paul was compelled to ask if he had become their enemy because he told them the truth (Gal. 4:14-16). Do we despise those who tell us what we need to hear?

Simply stated, unless we have a love of the truth, we will never appreciate the truths that hurt (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Unless we are willing to accept painful truths, we cannot know the sanctifying power of truth (John 17:17). Unless we obey the truth, we will be condemned (Rom. 2:8).

How much do you appreciate truth? The answer is painfully obvious when we are confronted with agonizing truths that require change in our lives. Change hurts, but the truth saves. How will you respond the next time you are confronted with the truth?

- by Jonathan Perz

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## **Beware Of Normal**

An ad for a local termite exterminator warned that one of the first signs of termite infection in your home is that "everything looks perfectly normal." It is their way of convincing us that a lot of damage can be done before you even notice it.

The ad might serve to remind us of problems that can occur in our spiritual house if we do not take protective measures. The very foundation can be destroyed while everything on the outside seems to be normal by the standards of our day. When our lives are comfortably blended into the society we live in, when there is nothing unusual about our moral or religious principles, when our priorities are the same as the great majority of our neighbors, then things are dangerously "normal." The problem is that "normal" is a term that is determined by man's standards, and though measuring up to it may provide a degree of comfort here, it falls far short when it comes to laying up treasures in heaven.

Paul warned the Corinthians of some who "*measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding*" (2 Cor. 10:12). It is God's yardstick that matters, not that of the "mainstream of society." God has always required His people to be separate (Isa. 52:11; 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1) not physically withdrawn, but distinct in conversation and conduct, not fashioned according to the world (Rom. 12:1,2). It is a sobering Biblical truth that few will be saved; the majority will enter the broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13,14). It is strange, then, that we should be satisfied with attaining a status accepted by society. What value is it, if we lose our souls?

Friend, if your life seems "normal" enough by man's standards, it may be that your spiritual house is caving in. It will not be shored up by man's money or man's tools, but by the Word which framed the worlds (Heb. 11:3). The answer is some honest, objective study of it, for it is the standard which will judge us (John 12:48).

- by Larry Walker

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## **Should We Be "Tolerant?"**

Many people have the opinion that we all should be "tolerant" of the religious views of

everyone else. In fact, about the only thing that receives much criticism these days is the 'intolerance' of some of us who argue against certain religious beliefs. We're frequently viewed as being "fanatics," and mean-spirited "bigots." They tell us to be less judgmental and learn to accept all forms of religious expression as being equally good and beneficial.

All of this stems from an apparent failure to distinguish between different forms of "tolerance." There are at least three kinds:

- *Legal tolerance*: This is the recognition that everyone has a legal right to believe and practice whatever he or she feels is best and right.
- *Social tolerance*: This is the notion that everyone ought to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their particular religious convictions.
- *Uncritical tolerance*: The idea that no one ought to ever make a judgment relative to what others believe religiously. It suggests that it is not possible to determine what is right or true, and that all religious beliefs and practices are equally good.

We agree that all Christians are obligated by the Word of God to honor the first two forms of "tolerance." We would fiercely defend the legal right of every person to make their own decisions in matters of religion. Furthermore, we understand that the Lord has taught us to treat everyone with honor and dignity (1 Peter 2:17). To do otherwise would put us in direct violation of His will.

It is the idea of "uncritical tolerance" that is not found in the Scriptures. Instead, we are commanded to compare what people teach and believe with what the Bible says (1 John 4:1,2; Galatians 1:8,9; Matthew 7:15-20). We are to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). In this regard, there is no room for tolerance -- we must be faithful to God and His word (2 John 9-11).

**- by Greg Gwin**