

What is Truth?

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Just before Pilate's decision to have Jesus crucified Jesus said to Pilate *"Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."* Pilate responded by saying, *"What is truth?"* Whether Pilate said this out of sarcasm or sincerely we do not know.

We do know it is a question men have asked over the ages.

It is human nature to want to know the truth. Jesus once said, *"And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"*(John 8:32). Jesus was speaking of truth in spiritual matters.

I have found in discussions with those who come from different religious backgrounds that they will use different sources for religious authority. If we use different sources for authority we will inevitably end up with different conclusions. Different sources will provide different conclusions.

It can be useful to review some of the sources used to justify religious practices in our day, and then discover what is the one and only absolute true source for all that we believe and practice in religion.

SOME SAY, "TRUTH IS RELATIVE."

Some say there are no absolutes. When you carry this reasoning out to its final conclusion it leaves right and wrong in shambles. For example, apply this reasoning to our courts.

If stealing, rape, murder, terrorism, etc. are relative then it makes a farce out of our judicial system.

This raises the question whether the Scriptures are absolute truth or are they relative? Paul said, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*(2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

If Scripture is inspired of God then it must be absolute truth. There is no way inspired Scripture can be relative! Most people who say truth is relative do not believe the Scriptures are inspired.

If you cannot accept Paul's declaration, then you owe it to yourself to look at the internal and external evidences that the Bible is God's inspired word.

The proof for its authenticity is overwhelming. No other historical document has as much evidence to prove its integrity. Paul declares his preaching was vain and our faith is vain if what he had preached was not true. (See 1 Corinthians 15:11-17.)

Why were intelligent men like Paul so willing to suffer so much and even die for what they believed and taught?

There was no financial gain, no special recognition or promotions to be gained from their efforts. They did it because they knew it was true.

SOME SAY, "I KNOW WHAT I FEEL"

Many rely on their feelings for what they believe and practice.

They say, "I had rather have what I feel here than a stack of Bibles." Others declare with great conviction, "I know what I feel and no one can take that away from me."

Can feelings be trusted?

Sometimes they can but many times they cannot. If they are based on the truth of God's word then they can be trusted. If not then they cannot be trusted.

Feelings can be very deceiving. Take the case of Joseph in the Old Testament. Out of jealousy His brothers sold him into slavery. They took his coat and dipped it in the blood of a goat.

Then they brought the coat to their father saying, "*We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?*" Seeing the coat Jacob recognized it as Joseph's. He concluded a wild animal had devoured Joseph.

He said, "*It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.*" For many years Jacob sincerely believed Joseph was when he wasn't.

There is the case of Saul of Tarsus who persecuted the church. He sought out Christians to be bound in chains and punished for turning from Judaism to Christianity.

He did this "*in all good conscience*" (Acts 23:1). He felt he was doing the right thing. Later He realized he was wrong. He became a convert to Christianity.

Feelings had led him in the wrong direction. Later the truth of God's word would lead him in the right direction. Emotions are very unstable when it comes to truth.

One should be absolutely sure that what they feel is in harmony with what the Word of God teaches.

"MY PARENTS WERE GOOD PEOPLE"

Many when discovering a truth that contradicts their previous beliefs will point to their parents' beliefs as the same as theirs. It is as if their parent's integrity is being questioned.

Be thankful for good parents who brought you up to respect spiritual matters. However, they may not have had the opportunity to learn the truth.

If living, you have the opportunity to teach them the truth. If no longer living, rest assured God will do what is just. If they could return they would advise you to obey the truth

"I TRUST MY PASTOR"

Most people have the utmost respect for the preacher where they are members. He is intelligent, highly educated, successful, etc. This was the same situation Paul found himself in at the time of his conversion.

He writes; *"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today."*

Gamaliel was one of the great rabbies. He was *"honoured by all the people."*

Furthermore Paul had direct contact with members of the Sanhedrin. This ruling body of Jews was composed of some of the best educated and trained men in the traditions of Judaism.

In fact it was the Sanhedrin that sent Paul out to run down Jews who had been converted to Christianity. When Paul learned the truth he said, *I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem."*

Paul could have gone to Gamaliel or someone on the Sanhedrin. Instead when he learned of his error he obeyed what he knew to be true.

"IT'S OUR TRADITION"

Tradition is deeply rooted in many. But there is both good and bad tradition as can be seen in the clash between the teachings of Jesus and the traditions of the Jews. In **Matthew 15** we read of a discussion Jesus had with the Pharisees over their traditions.

They had collected hundreds of rules and regulations into a book called the *MISHNAH*. Many were in direct conflict with Moses' law.

Jesus told them; *"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your traditions?"* God had not authorized them. They had invented them. They considered these traditions on an equal with God's law.

Paul had been schooled in these traditions. He wrote: *"I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."* When Paul learned the truth he had to break with these traditions.

"THAT IS JUST YOUR INTERPRETATION."

Many say they accept only the Bible as their authority but there are different interpretations of the Bible.

The problem with this is that it stands in conflict with what Paul says in **Ephesians 4:4, 5**. *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism."*

Take the phrase, *"one Lord, one faith, one baptism."* The word *"one"* does not allow for 2, 3 or 4 Lords. *"One"* does not leave room for many faiths. By the same token *"one"* does not allow for 2 or 3 baptisms. They can't all be right since Paul says there is *"one faith."*

A classic example of interpretation is how baptism is approached. **Acts 2:38** says, *"Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Men come out with different conclusions about baptism. One says baptism is sprinkling while the word in the original Greek is immersion.

Where do they get sprinkling?

A tradition originating in A. D. 250.

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Another person looks at this verse and says baptism is not essential to salvation even though Peter says it is for the remission of sins. Where does this idea come from? From Martin Luther's doctrine of salvation by faith only in the 1500s.

Still another person rejects baptism by saying "I have had an experience which left me with deep feelings that tell me I am saved."

Feelings become the basis of his convictions. It was the Moravians and John Wesley in the 1700s who originated this doctrine.

Another looks at the same verse and says, "Baptism is ok, but not essential. My mother and father were good Christians and were never baptized." Authority becomes his parents.

People go to the wrong sources for authority. In John 17, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

The Word of God is the only authority in religious matters. Jesus told his disciples before ascending to heaven, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18).

This is our soul authority.

What do you think?