

# “Buy the Truth, and Sell It Not”

***“Buy the truth,  
and sell it not.”*** **THE LANGUAGE OF OUR**  
**—Proverbs 23:23** opening text implies that the  
truth is of great value, and  
that if we desire to possess it we must be willing to  
pay whatever it costs. It also indicates the possibility  
of losing possession of the truth after we have pur-  
chased it—that it is possible to sell the truth. What  
is this truth which we are admonished to buy, and  
not sell? How do we buy it, and how can we sell it?

The “truth” referred to is God’s truth. When Je-  
sus told Pilate that he had come into the world to  
be a king and to bear witness to the truth, Pilate  
asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38) Jesus had an-  
swered this question the night before when, pray-  
ing on behalf of his disciples, he said, “Sanctify  
them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (chap.  
17:17) God’s “word” in Jesus’ day consisted of the  
Old Testament Scriptures. Later, this word of truth  
was completed by Jesus’ own teachings and exam-  
ple, and by the writings and sermons of the apos-  
tles. The last of these was John’s account of the  
wonderful vision which the Lord gave to him on

the Isle of Patmos, which we know as the Book of Revelation.

There is much in the Bible that is historical, much that is prophetic, and a great deal of what we may properly speak of as devotional truths, consisting of God's precious promises to guide his faithful people and to give them strength to do his will in their every time of need. The Bible's teachings on the subject of prayer also come within the category of devotional truth.

Much of the prophetic truth of the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, is of the short-range variety, pertaining largely to the experiences of the nation of Israel. Many of these prophecies were fulfilled within the lifetime of a given generation, and their fulfillment recorded—thus they became a part of the Bible's history. On the other hand, there are many prophecies of the Bible whose fulfillment would occur hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of years in the future from the time they were given. These are of the greatest importance to us because they relate to the working out of God's plan of the ages.

Then there are the doctrinal truths of the Bible. These are the truths which outline God's great theme song of redemption and restoration for the human race. The psalmist wrote, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance." (Ps. 89:15) This "joyful sound" is the great Messianic theme of the Bible which can be traced from Genesis to Revelation. The individual doctrines which make up this theme, together with the devotional, historical, and prophetic aspects of the Bible, are the great body of truths by which we are sanctified,

and for which we are dedicated to lay down our lives.

## **DISOBEDIENCE AND DEATH**

Man's ability to continue living depended upon his obedience. However, our first parents disobeyed. Eve was deceived into partaking of the forbidden fruit. Adam willfully transgressed the divine command, and because of his disobedience brought upon himself the penalty of death which, in turn, was passed on by heredity to all his progeny. (Rom. 5:12) When passing sentence upon our first parents God said to "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" (Rev. 20:2), that he—Satan—would bruise the heel of the "seed" of the woman, and that the "seed" of the woman would bruise his head.—Gen. 3:15

In the statement to the serpent, we have the first indication given us in the Scriptures of a coming deliverance from sin and death for the fallen human race. Later, this prospect became more comprehensive when God said to Abraham that through his "seed" all families of the earth would be blessed. We speak of this as the Abrahamic Covenant, or promise.—Gen. 12:3; 22:16-18

From Abraham's time onward, his descendants looked for this coming seed of blessing. When Jesus was born, the angel announced, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10,11) Later, Paul explained that Jesus, and his loyal footstep followers, constitute the seed promised to Abraham.—Gal. 3:16,27-29

## **THE RANSOM**

The Apostle Paul wrote, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:3-6) The Greek word here translated “ransom” means “a price to correspond.” The perfect man Jesus gave his perfect humanity as a corresponding price for the perfect man Adam who had sinned and forfeited his life. This “ransom” feature of God’s plan is the very hub of the entire divine arrangement to rescue mankind from sin and death.

Many of the prophecies pertaining to the coming of Jesus as the Messiah foretold the redemptive work he would accomplish. (Isa. 53) It was also foreshadowed by the slaying of the unblemished lamb in Israel’s annual Passover celebration. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, made this connection for us when, seeing Jesus coming to him to be baptized, he said, “Behold the [Passover] Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin [Adamic sin] of the world.” (John 1:29) The resurrected Jesus, testifying to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, pointed out to them from all the prophets that Christ must first suffer and die, thus providing the ransom price, before he could enter into his glory.—Luke 24:25-27

## **THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS**

Another fundamental feature of God’s plan—this precious truth—is the resurrection of Jesus

from the dead. Paul, writing concerning Jesus, says that he “was delivered [to death] for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom. 4:25) To the Athenians on Mars’ hill, Paul explained that God had “given assurance unto all men” of the truth concerning his plan of salvation by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.—Acts 17:31

It is important to realize that Jesus was not resurrected to life as a human, but as a glorious divine being. He gave his flesh for the “life of the world.” (John 6:51) The Scriptures clearly teach that while Jesus was put to death in the flesh, he was made alive in the Spirit, in the exact image of the invisible God.—II Cor. 5:16; I Pet. 3:18; Col. 1:15

Jesus was present with his disciples for forty days between the time of his resurrection and his ascension, but for only a very small portion of this time were the disciples able to see him. The last of these miraculous appearances was on the Mount of Olives. It was then that he renewed his commission to them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and promised that they would shortly receive the Holy Spirit to give them guidance and strength for this great undertaking.—Acts 1:4-8

## **NOT TO CONVERT THE WORLD**

The preaching of the Gospel throughout the world since Christ’s First Advent has not been for the purpose of converting the world. At a conference of the apostles in Jerusalem, James repeated Peter’s earlier assertion that it was to take out a people for the Lord’s name. While the Jewish nation generally rejected Jesus as their Messiah, some did receive

him and became his followers. These became “sons of God,” members of the Lord’s family. However, there were too few of these to make up the number called for in God’s plan, so the message went to the Gentiles.—John 1:11,12; Acts 15:14

This company, identified as only a “little flock,” has been called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. (Luke 12:32) These have been called to suffer and to die with him, with the promise that, if faithful in this, they will live and reign with him. (II Tim. 2:11,12; Rev. 20:6) Paul speaks of them as running for “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” and as being “partakers of the heavenly calling.” (Phil. 3:14; Heb. 3:1) Jesus promised that these would be with him, and John adds that they would be like him and see him as he is.—John 14:3; I John 3:1-3

## **CHRIST RETURNS**

The work of gathering out from Jews and Gentiles “a little flock” to live and reign with Christ was to take an entire age in the plan of God—the Gospel Age. During the ending portion of this age there was to be a harvest, when the “wheat” would be separated from the “tares.” This work was to be supervised by the returned Lord, who was to be invisibly present as the chief “reaper” from the beginning of the harvest.—Matt. 13:24-30,36-43

Jesus was not to return as a human. As we have seen, he gave his human life to redeem the world from death, and in his resurrection was highly exalted to the divine nature. It is as a divine being that he was to return, first to supervise the work of harvest in this end of the age, and then to establish

the long-promised Messianic kingdom. While we will not here go into detail concerning the scriptural proof of these points, we believe that we are living in the time of harvest—even nearing its close—and that our Lord has been present in conducting this work.

When the harvest work of this Gospel Age is complete, Jesus explained, those represented by the “wheat” will “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (Matt. 13:43) At that time, all of these will have had their part in the “first resurrection,” and together with Christ will then “live and reign with him [Christ] a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6

Also, during the closing harvest period of this age is a “time of trouble” (Dan. 12:1), during which the present sinful order of things—under the leadership of Satan—will be brought to an end. This trouble, though very severe, is necessary in order to prepare the remainder of mankind for the righteous rulership of Christ and his “little flock.” Here again, we believe that the world is in the midst of such trouble at the present time, and that it will continue until God, through the work of the returned Lord, says, “It is done.”—Rev. 16:17

## **THE KINGDOM WORK**

When the work of the harvest of the present age is finished, then will quickly follow the outpouring of the foretold blessings of health and life to all the families of the earth as promised to Abraham. Peter spoke of this phase of God’s plan as a period of “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21), declaring that it had been spoken by God through his holy prophets from the beginning of the world. What a

glorious climax to God's plan this will be, for it will mean the end of sickness and of death, and all the other evils which have afflicted mankind since the fall in Eden to the present time.—I Cor. 15:25,26; Rev. 21:4

*Thayer's Greek Lexicon* defines the word restitution, as used in Acts 3:21, as follows: "restoration of the perfect state before the fall." In order to accomplish such a complete restoration, Christ's thousand-year kingdom will be a period of enlightenment, so that the people will no longer be ignorant of God and of his laws as they are today. Because they will be enlightened and no longer in darkness, as is the case under current sinful conditions, mankind will be expected to obey, and the penalty for disobedience then will be the same as it was for Adam and his race—namely, death. Thus, Peter declares that those who do not obey will be "destroyed from among the people." (vs. 23) Today the whole world—the righteous and the unrighteous, the believers and the unbelievers, are dying. However, in Christ's kingdom only those who willfully refuse to believe and who disobey the laws of the kingdom will die. This is described in the Bible as "the second death."—Rev. 20:14,15

When our first parents transgressed divine law, they not only lost life, but they became estranged from God. During the thousand years of Christ's reign, the whole world of mankind will be reconciled to God. This is described in Jeremiah 31:31-34 as entering into a covenant with God—the foretold "New Covenant." In that covenant of reconciliation, the people will have the law of God written in their hearts. They will be restored to the full divine

image possessed by Adam before he sinned. Surely this will be a restitution—a restoration—of all that was lost by our first parents, and is a glorious prospect for the sin-cursed and dying race!

## **HOW TO “BUY” THE TRUTH**

We have presented but a brief outline of the main features of the “joyful sound” of the Gospel of Christ, the truth of God’s plan. How can we “buy” this precious treasure of knowledge which is stored up so abundantly in the Word of God?

We buy the truth by making it our own. It is like a jewel we may see on display. We admire the jewel, but realize that in order to own it there is a price to pay. Using this as an illustration, we might think of the Bible as a display case in which, through reading, we see and admire the many and varied facets of the truth. Many “see” the truth in this way, and up to a point admire it, but do not truly make it their own.

The truth reveals the glorious character of God, and if it is received into good and honest hearts, it has a drawing power, causing us to love and want to serve God. If we receive our knowledge of the truth in the proper spirit, we will be led to make a full consecration of ourselves to do our Heavenly Father’s will. The full dedication of ourselves to God and to his cause is the price—or cost—of the truth.

As we have seen, the very center of God’s plan for the salvation of the world is Jesus and his work of redemption. Paul outlined what the result of the knowledge of Jesus and his place in God’s plan should be to those who see it displayed through the Word: “The love of Christ constraineth us; because

we thus judge, that if one died for all, . . . they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—II Cor. 5:14,15

## **NOT MOMENTARY**

The giving of ourselves to God is not a momentary act. It begins, of course, with a definite surrender of ourselves to him to do his will. However, this original presentation, this agreement or covenant, would be of little value should we fail to follow through by obediently laying down our lives in divine service day by day, year by year, until we have been faithful even unto death. This, too, is the cost of the truth, if we are to really make it our own, and have its mighty power continue to transform our lives, to make us suitable to participate in the first resurrection to live and reign with Christ.

Not only is the glorious plan of the ages itself revealed throughout the Bible, but the will of God for his dedicated people is also to be found there. One of the great tests of the sincerity of our consecration is maintaining our loyalty to the Lord's instructions. All of the Lord's people are imperfect according to the flesh. One evidence of this is in the fact that we often find ourselves preferring some aspects of the divine will above others, or perhaps by giving undue emphasis to one or two aspects of the truth while ignoring others.

For example, the Lord wants his people to look to him in prayer for guidance and comfort. This is a part of the Lord's will for all his people. This does not mean, however, that we should ignore other aspects of his Word. The Lord wants us to love one

another, and Paul wrote an entire chapter on love (I Cor. 13), but this does not mean that love should displace the other fruits of the spirit and their related activity in our life. Jesus, quoting Moses, said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”—Matt. 4:4

## **WITHOUT REPROACH**

Another way in which we “buy the truth” is to live a life of service, carrying out the “ministry of reconciliation.” (II Cor. 5:18) However, if our service is to be acceptable, it is essential that we be guided by the Word of God with respect to the message we give out to the people, and also adhere ourselves to the standards of righteousness which the Lord has given us.

Ministering to the truth demands love, patience, purity, and a proper use of the Word of God. It calls for the emptying of self, that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit. It calls for sacrifice of self, that we may make others rich in the things of God. It calls for putting on the whole armor of God, that as good soldiers of Jesus Christ we may resist the onslaughts of Satan, who goes about as a roaring lion, “seeking whom he may devour.”—I Pet. 5:8

All of this is essential to our retaining the truth and its spirit as the inspirational power in our life of sacrifice. Thus, while recognizing the marvelous beauty of the truth, it is costly to “buy,” and difficult to retain throughout all the days of our earthly pilgrimage. It might well cost us the scorn of our friends, and persecution by those who prefer darkness to light.

When the psalmist spoke of the blessedness of those who “know the joyful sound” of truth, he said that such walk in the light of God’s countenance. (Ps. 89:15) This makes the truth worth much more than it costs, because those found worthy to possess it have the assurance of God’s favor. How wonderful that is, for, as Paul wrote, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31) It indicates, as Paul also wrote, that since we love God and are called according to his purpose, all things are working together for our good as new creatures.—chap. 8:28

### **“SELL IT NOT”**

Solomon admonished us not only to buy the truth, but to hold on to it—“sell it not.” How could we sell the truth? In a word, this could be done by failure to live up to our vows of consecration. Paul wrote, “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”—Heb. 2:1; 4:1

Every precious promise of God to his people has conditions attached to it. Meeting these conditions faithfully and joyfully is part of the price of truth. We can sell the truth by failure to meet the conditions surrounding the promises of God. The “things which we have heard,” mentioned by Paul, are the great truths of the Word of God. Taking heed to these things implies loyalty to the Word of God as the supreme authority in our lives.

We could sell the truth by giving heed to other voices than that of the Good Shepherd, whose voice of truth has reached us through the Bible. If we

give heed to tradition rather than the Word of God, we are selling the truth. A simple example of this is what the Bible says concerning the penalty of sin. The Bible declares it to be death, but tradition says it is eternal torture. This is merely an example. There are many traditions which run counter to the Word of God, and our loyalty to the Scriptures as against the traditions and opinions of men is part of the price of truth. We could also sell the truth by letting it be crowded out, or exchanging it for things of the world.

The Bible makes it clear that God has provided human teachers to help us understand more clearly his inspired Word. We should appreciate these, and profit from the help we receive from them. There is a tendency at times to lean too heavily upon the helpers, to the neglect of the Word of God. The value of helpers provided by the Lord is measured by their faithfulness in serving merely as an index finger to point us to the Word of God.

Even the inspired Apostle Paul, one of the outstanding teachers in the church, complimented the Bereans of old, saying that they were more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they searched the Scriptures daily to prove whether or not the things he taught them were true. (Acts 17:11) If one who was an inspired apostle of the Lord rejoiced to note the desire of his pupils to prove all things by the Word of God, should it not be so with us? Surely any lessening of this determination would indicate a degree of unfaithfulness which could, if not corrected, lead to a selling of the truth.

Are we maintaining our “first love” for the truth—that glorious truth of God’s plan? This truth is that

simple “gospel of Christ: . . . the power of God unto salvation.” (Rom. 1:16) Does the Gospel of the grace of God continue to inspire us to lay down our lives in its proclamation, and in building up our brethren in this most holy faith? Do we accept the opportunities of sacrifice in God’s cause with the same degree of enthusiasm as when we first dedicated ourselves to the doing of his will? If so, we are demonstrating that we are willing that the truth should continue to cost us our all.

If we maintain this attitude, it means that we are not in danger of selling the truth, but are determined to be faithful to it, and to all its precepts, even unto death. Such faithfulness will, in God’s due time, lead to glory and honor and immortality, which Paul wrote could be attained only through patient continuance in well doing. —Rom. 2:7

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