


GEMS OF TRUTH

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FROM THE EDITOR



We are admonished to “*seek peace and chase after it*” (1 Peter 3:11 CEB). How diligently we need to follow these simple instructions today. We have political turmoil, economic challenges, struggles for power, and wars around the world as well as all the personal drama that consumes the lives of so many. How shall we ever have peace in our lives collectively and individually? That question sounds simplistic since it has been asked since the beginning of recorded history. There has always been a little remnant who had a

vision of human existence that was higher than constant conflict. It’s much easier to follow the crowd and participate in the conflict but I would like to join in heart with those who “chase after” peace. Would you like to join also? The articles in this issue of **GEMS OF TRUTH** could all be tied to the topic of seeking peace at some level. Look for the common thread as you read and I would love to hear from you.
TD

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WHAT DOES GOD WANT?

Micah 6:8 Common English Bible (CEB)

**8 He has told you, human one,
what is good and
what the LORD requires from you:
to do justice, embrace faithful love,
and walk humbly with your God.**

Matthew 7:12 Common English Bible (CEB)

**12 Therefore, you should treat people in
the same way that you want people to
treat you; this is the Law and the Prophets.**

Matthew 22:35-40 Common English Bible (CEB)

**35 One of them, a legal expert, tested him. 36 “Teacher, what is the greatest
commandment in the Law?”**

**37 He replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your
being, and with all your mind. 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39
And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. 40 All
the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”**

I've been attending classes for the past few weeks on the subject, “What does God want?” Many wonderful aspects of God's purpose for us were discussed. The verses quoted above concisely summarize what is absolutely paramount. The history of Christianity over the past 2000 years since our Lord ascended has revealed the perversity of human beings and our tendency to major on minors and minor on majors. Much of this history is very sad indeed. The simple teachings and healing works of Jesus somehow got lost very early in the Christian church. Just imagine what a different world we would have if the attention had been focused on finding ways to treat others with love, dignity, and respect instead of giving so much attention to theological beliefs. In recent years there has been a movement towards a more loving expression of Christian faith and I give thanks for that. There are many wonderful works being done today among people of faith that were scarcely dreamed of in the past and in many cases people of widely different beliefs are learning that working side by side for



the common good is much better than bickering about different beliefs. The challenge for all of us is to keep our focus on that which is really the most important of all and I think the verses quoted above express it very clearly.

RIGHT AND WRONG USE OF THE SCRIPTURES



2 Peter 3:15-16 Common English Bible (CEB)

15 Consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation, just as our dear friend and brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, 16 speaking of these things in all his letters. Some of his remarks are hard to understand, and people who are ignorant and whose faith is weak twist them to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.

2 Timothy 2:14-16 Common English Bible (CEB)

14 Remind them of these things and warn them in the sight of God not to engage in battles over words that aren't helpful and only destroy those who hear them. 15 Make an effort to present yourself to God as a tried-and-true worker, who doesn't need to be ashamed but is one who interprets the message of truth correctly. 16 Avoid their godless discussions, because they will lead many people into ungodly behavior.

These verses clearly show that from the very beginning of the church there have been those who have twisted and misused the Scriptures which leads to their own destruction, misleads others, and inevitably leads to people mistreating one another or behaving in an ungodly manner. One of the ways Scriptures have been misused which has even led to folks putting one another to death is by engaging in battles over words and splitting the Bible up into proof texts in order to bolster up a particular doctrine. I've known people who once were compulsive-obsessive about proving certain teachings and were especially concerned about correct terminology and in the end became disillusioned and agnostics or atheists when their beliefs went bankrupt. They had based their whole life on getting the correct information and so couldn't weather some of the doctrinal earthquakes that totally shook their former beliefs. The Scriptures should not be chopped up into proof texts and neither should they be used as a weapon against others whom we may think are falling short in some area of their lives. We need to have the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a genuine love for people to use the Scriptures properly. I've written numerous articles on Scriptural interpretation

and the place of the Bible in the spiritual journey so I'll not repeat these thoughts here. I encourage all to have an attitude of humility which alone would solve most of the disputes that arise.

I think these verses summarize well the essential purpose of the Scriptures so I'll quote them without further comment. They speak powerfully for themselves:

2 Timothy 3:15-17 New Living Translation (NLT)

15 You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

John 20:30-31 The Message (MSG)

30-31 Jesus provided far more God-revealing signs than are written down in this book. These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.

CAUGHT IN THEIR OWN NET

Psalm 9:15-16 Common English Bible (CEB)

**15 The nations have fallen
into the hole they themselves made!
Their feet are caught
in the very net they themselves hid!
16 The LORD is famous for the justice
he has done;
it's his own doing
that the wicked are trapped.**



Sin carries within itself the seeds of its own punishment and destruction for it is contrary to God's Kingdom which is based on unselfish and giving love. Notice in verse 16 the close association between the justice of God and the punishment that the

wicked bring on themselves (verse 15). My own conclusion is that the wrath of God is essentially the unfolding and outworking of the results of living apart from Him and from either ignoring or living in defiance of the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven. I am aware that scholars have written whole books about God's wrath and how it plays out but when I factor in all biblical data the viewpoint that His wrath is manifested in the consequences that departing from the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven bring makes the most sense to me. Think especially about a deeper meaning to the "justice" [fairness--faithfulness] of God in His dealings with humankind.

GLORY IN THIS



Jeremiah 9:23-24 Amplified Bible (Amp)

23 Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise and skillful person glory and boast in his wisdom and skill; let not the mighty and powerful person glory and boast in his strength and power; let not the person who is rich [in physical gratification and earthly wealth] glory and boast in his [temporal satisfactions and earthly] riches;

24 But let him who glories glory in this: that he understands and knows Me [personally and practically, directly discerning and recognizing My character], that I am the Lord, Who practices loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord.

I have pondered these verses many, many times over the past 40+ years since I first heard them expounded on in a sermon. The world generally glories in and looks for satisfaction and fulfillment in many human pursuits that are without substance or real meaning.

There is nothing more wonderful, more fulfilling and eternal in its very nature than to enter the realm of spiritual understanding [the land of milk and honey] which I believe is a gift of God's grace given to those who sincerely want it and spend time seeking it. The peace of God is the greatest treasure that we can find. Materialism and worldly wisdom bring no real fulfillment and will pass away at some point (see 1 John 2:15-17).

UNDERSTANDING THE DEPTHS

1 Corinthians 2:11 Common English Bible (CEB)

11 Who knows a person's depths except their own spirit that lives in them? In the same way, no one has known the depths of God except God's Spirit.

We observe a person and see their facial expressions and perhaps notice the way they dress and then make a judgment about them. However, no one but that person knows the depths of what is really going on deep inside and even that process of self-understanding is always incomplete. Can any of us say that we *fully* understand our own thoughts and actions? If our self-understanding is incomplete then how can we ever hope to even come close to understanding another or making a judgment?

So our understanding of the "depths of God" is even more incomplete than what we can fathom about ourselves and others. We are *totally* dependent upon God's Spirit and need to continually seek for divine guidance in humility. Little by little more about the meaning of life and God are revealed to us and this is an ongoing process that I believe will continue throughout eternity. The more we realize our need of God's Spirit and seek His face in complete dependence upon Him the more we'll see how little we understand if left to ourselves and how much we need God's help every moment.



LETTING GO OF NOTHINGNESS

Isaiah 26:13-14 New Living Translation (NLT)

- 13 O Lord our God, others have ruled us,
but you alone are the one we worship.**
**14 Those we served before are dead and gone.
Their departed spirits will never return!
You attacked them and destroyed them,
and they are long forgotten.**



We've all had many things in our lives that have been of high priority, quite possibly more important than our pursuit of God. Over time they've brought us anxiety and suffering in some form so we've learned their emptiness and have let them go, never to return. In Scripture often it speaks of God as doing something which would be better understood as His allowing us to experience the results of our wrong thinking and doing. So the things of life that have been empty of any real substance become "destroyed" and "long forgotten" because of their intrinsic nothingness. Would it not be wise to carefully examine everything we think and do each day and let go of that which is not really all that important and focus more fully on the things of God that are eternal?

DON'T JUDGE

Matthew 7:1-2 Common English Bible (CEB)

1 "Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. 2 You'll receive the same judgment you give. Whatever you deal out will be dealt out to you.

I doubt that there is any area of human existence more complex than the matter of judging. Even the word "judging" itself has a variety of meanings and we each tend to define it from our own perspectives about right and wrong, our belief system, or our educational background.

Here is an extract from a dictionary:

Judge: verb

1 *we judged that it was too late to proceed: form the opinion, conclude, decide; consider, believe, think, deem, view; deduce, gather, infer, gauge, estimate, guess, surmise, conjecture; regard as, look on as, take to be, rate as, class as; informal: reckon, figure.*

This definition has many nuances and so it isn't as simple as sometimes we would like to think. Do we have a right to our opinions? Must we *always* have an opinion about anything and everything? In my experience in relating to people over several decades,



especially among those who are conscientious and religious, I've seen a lot of division and people being put in antagonistic relationships because of constant judging going on. Those who take their beliefs seriously often feel that they need to force their beliefs on others and judge as spiritually inferior or possibly even apostate from God those who have different beliefs.

We need to always keep in mind that the heavy hand of judgment that we put on others will eventually come back on ourselves. **“You’ll receive the same judgment you give. Whatever you deal out will be dealt out to you.”**

The truth for me is that I will always be errant in my judgments. I must seek the aid of the Holy Spirit and humble myself before God constantly. Closely connected to a judgmental attitude would be thinking that I should lay down rules for others to follow.

HOLDING OUR NEIGHBOR IN THE LIGHT



"This life of self-effacement is not a belittling of ourselves; it is not being over interested in, or concerned with, ourselves. Rather is it practicing what was learned in the First Degree, watching our thoughts and inner feelings, keeping consciousness in line by means of the continuous acknowledgment of God, and holding our neighbor in our consciousness in the same light in which we would like to be held in the consciousness of our neighbor."--from Joel Goldsmith's "A Parenthesis in Eternity" Chapter 17 - The Mystical Life Through the

Two Great Commandments

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