

PRESENT TRUTH

2 Peter 1:12.

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in **the present truth.**"

This verse should be a reminder to us of 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17.

The Bible is a revelation of God Himself to us more than about us to God. He knows us, but we need to know Him. Thus when we read the Bible we should be aware that God is speaking to us.

Paul writing to Timothy admonishes him, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3:14). Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from a child which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Then he gives the assurance that all Scripture ("graphe," the writings, something written, a document or Holy Writ) is given by inspiration of God, and the reasons for it. All truth culminates or comes to its fulness in Paul's epistles.

Peter writing to the strangers scattered abroad would "put them always in remembrance of these things" (2 Peter 1-11), and then says, ". . . though ye know them, and be established in the **present truth**" (vs. 12). They had a position given to them, as well as promises, and the exhortation to obedience.

There is no real truth outside of God. He is the God of truth, the true and living God, and beside Him there is no other. He is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega.

The subject of "present truth" is what I want to set forth to you. There are many books written on some facet of truth and are worthy of our reading. On the subject of Predestination we have Zanchius, Boettner and Owen. Justification & Sanctification, Pink, Rhoades, J.C. Ryle. On the Atonement we have Owen, Pink, etc. We could add many more of the Puritan writers to this list, i.e. Flavel, Boston, Brooks, There are also several writings on Dispensationalism, Progressive Revelation, use of the Miles Coverdale method of study, Rightly Dividing the Word, and what is "for us" and what is "to us."

Because there are new ones in the fellowship, and because there are some in the fellowship at present that seem to have uncertainty as to what is "TO US" and what is "FOR US," what constitutes "PRESENT TRUTH," OR "PAST TRUTH," I would like to spend this time trying to set forth in simplicity what it means. If we get the foundation laid correctly then the structure will stand. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16), but we must believe the Present Truth, i.e. the final revelation of truth (which is for our obedience), the epistles of Paul written during the Acts period in which the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith were set forth (which are Galatians, 1,2 Thessalonians, 1,2 Corinthians, Romans, and Hebrews), and his prison letters written after the book of Acts closed (which are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy). It is in the post-Acts revelation concerning the Mystery of the Gospel that we go on to the perfection of the new man, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Peter would establish the saints of his time in the Present Truth of his revelation, and Paul would establish **us in the Present Truth of his revelation to the Body of Christ**. God rewards on the basis of faith. Many saints believe the gospel, but fail to receive the Present Truth for this dispensation, i.e. the

unsearchable riches of Christ. God wants us to BELIEVE SOMETHING, before we DO SOMETHING. Once we establish our position we can practice obedience to the exhortations which are given for that position.

Many who come into the teaching of rightly dividing the Word of truth, or what is "to us" and what is "for us," upon hearing it for the first time, i.e. all the Bible is "for us," but it is not all "to us," entertain the idea that we are throwing away the rest of the Bible, which is not true. We need all the Bible, but it is not all written for us to obey. Then there are others who go so far as to believe because they live in this age of pure grace, they can live as they please in what they call "their liberty." The understanding of the pure grace of God does not lead to licentiousness, but rather to thankfulness and gratitude that one has received grace, and the responsibility that comes with it to "walk worthy of this calling."

I hope to clarify the difference between ETERNAL truth, PAST truth, PRESENT truth, FUTURE truth, truth for APPLICATION, and truth for OBEDIENCE. Present truth and truth for obedience will be similar, as will Past truth and truth for application.

In each of God's ages, i.e. dispensations or administrations, there has been truth given by God that was only for that particular dispensation to which it pertained. It was related directly to the calling of that age, and their responsibility to believe and obey that truth. By doing so, they acknowledge that God has spoken to them. God deals on the principle of faith. "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). Man's primary responsibility in any age is to believe what God has spoken for that age. **Faith believes all that comes from God, but the faithful distinguish that truth that is directly to them.** God told Noah to build an ark, but he did not tell him to get into a land that I will shew thee. Abraham was not told to build an ark, but they both **believed what God had spoken to them and obeyed that revelation.**

Eternal truth is that truth which is laid down for all time without any change and transcending all dispensations. Grace and faith transcend all dispensations. Past truth is that truth which belonged to prior dispensations and has passed away because it was for that dispensation only.

Present truth is that truth which is "to us" as members of the Body of Christ.

Future truth is that truth which is prophesied and yet to take place.

Truth for Application is that truth which I can apply from all of Scripture.

Truth for our Obedience is that truth which is found in the practical section of Paul's epistles written after Acts to the Body of Christ, and deals with our walk in this unprophesied dispensation of the fulness of God.

Most difficulties arise from failure to keep three things in our mind as we read and study; who is speaking, to who is it being spoken, and at what time it is being spoken. Is it eternal truth, past truth, or present truth? How often do we read Scripture and just assume that the portion we are reading is something to us? Most generally it is the two ages, the kingdom age, i.e. from Matthew through the end of Acts, and the age of the fulness of God, i.e. Ephesians-Philippians-Colossians written to the Body of Christ which are mixed together, and cause all the confusion.

1. ETERNAL TRUTH.

What do we mean by eternal truth? This truth is something God has revealed that

transcends all dispensations and is always the same from Genesis through Revelation.

A. God is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1). We find all throughout the Word whenever creation is mentioned it is always God who creates or rather Christ who is God (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2-3; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 21:5). This is eternal truth and establishes for us that there is no one else who created anything, except God. Whatever was created or made was by Him.

B. The great I AM (Exodus 3:11-14; 6:3). Jehovah the self-existent eternal One, without beginning or ending. Before anything was I AM. "LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God" (Psalm 90:1,2). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). ". . . Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58).

C. God being the eternal I AM and the Creator of all things must of necessity be a Sovereign God. This means that He is the **ONLY** One who can do **what** He pleases, **how** He pleases, **when** He pleases, and **always** as He pleases. "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and **none** can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35). "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3). "For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in the earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psalm 145:4,5). His sovereignty in saving men is stated (Romans 9:10-18; Ephesians 2:1,5).

D. His unchangeableness. "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6). ". . . but thou remainest," ". . . but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail" (Hebrews 1:10-12). ". . . the immutability of his counsel and by two immutable things" (Hebrews 6:17-19).

E. Salvation by grace through faith and being declared righteous. Abel (Hebrews 11:4); Noah (Genesis 6:8; Hebrews 11:7); Abraham (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3,9,22); Rahab (Joshua 2; Hebrews 11:31); "these all died in faith" (Hebrews 11:13). All believers since the cross (Ephesians 2:8).

F. Satan's domain (Job 1:7; 2:1; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12).

G. Man's sinfulness (Genesis 3; Job 15:14-16; Romans 1:18-32).

We could go on with God's justice and His holiness and various other attributes, but the point is these truths never change, they are eternal. Since the revelation to Paul of the Gospel of the Grace of God in the d-b-r of Christ as man's only hope of salvation, that has never changed.

2. PAST TRUTH.

When we speak of Past truth we must be thinking of that which was Present truth in a past dispensation. The five offerings of Leviticus 1-6 were Present truth for that time, but they are now over. "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Colossians 2:16), God's ordinances of the past, or the ordinances invoked by man in the present (Colossians 2:20-22), i.e. those of the Acts period, water baptism, and the Passover supper which are also ended.

John the Baptist proclaimed, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Those who believed his message were believing Present truth. We do not believe that today for our obedience.

Who can deny that the Sabbath was to be observed? It was Present truth for that age, but is no longer Present truth (Romans 14:5-6; Hebrews 3:18-4:11). If this is not Past truth, the Seventh Day Adventists are right in what they do.

The O.T. laws of diet, purification, worship, etc. were all Present truth at that time in God's economy, but are now Past truth, having passed away with that dispensation. They were types and shadows of that which was to come.

Did the Scripture teach physical circumcision? It was given to Abraham as a seal of the covenant (Genesis 17:10-14), and was to him, Present truth. He was obedient and performed it, as well as his heirs. It was performed in the Acts dispensation (Acts 15:1,24); by Paul (Acts 16:3), and in obedience to the law (John 7:22,23). When Paul received his revelation circumcision became Past truth (Acts 15:22-29; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; Romans 2:29). When Paul received the Present truth, circumcision became spiritual and without hands, i.e. the cutting off of the body of the sins of the flesh or inward circumcision of the heart (Colossians 2:11-13).

Water baptism was Present truth in the dispensation of the kingdom during Acts. It identified them with repentant Israel and the kingdom of heaven. With those who believed the gospel of the kingdom before the crucifixion and those who believed in the risen Messiah. It signified the washing away of their sin of crucifying Him. It was practiced by John the Baptist (John 1:31-33), by the disciples of Christ (John 3:22; 4:2), and by Paul in his early ministry (Acts 19:4,5; 1 Corinthians 1:14-16). However it ceased with Paul (1 Corinthians 1:17), and is now Past truth. The Present truth baptism is a baptism by the Holy Spirit which places the believer into Christ. It is a spiritual baptism.

Who can deny that spiritual gifts and their communication were in use in the Acts dispensation? It was the time of the Acts of the Holy Spirit. "For I long to see you, that I might impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established" (Romans 1:11). "And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). Should we try to make the instructions in 1 Corinthians 14, i.e. the proper use of tongues, as "to us" when it was for a passing dispensation? The problem arises only for those who do. The sign gifts did cease (1 Corinthians 13:8).

We cannot deny that these have all given way to Present truth and are now Past truth. This does not mean that we go running roughshod over the principles of God as set forth in the past, but that we see Past truth is not given **for our obedience** in this dispensation. I **do not** have a responsibility to keep the feasts, the law or the ordinances.

O.T. prophecy and promises were Future truth, but their fulfillment in the N.T. made them Present truth, and the changing dispensations make them Past truth. The exception being those prophecies yet to be fulfilled.

a. Christ promised as the Saviour-Redeemer, His coming as the Saviour-Redeemer, His dying as my Saviour-Redeemer to pay the price for my sin, His being raised for my justification, and His ascending back to the right hand of the Father are truth that transcends all dispensations.

b. Christ promised as the coming Saviour and Messiah-King to Israel, crucified, buried, risen, ascended back to glory to return again at the Day of the Lord and to rule in

righteousness is both Past and Future truth, but not Present truth. He is Israel's Redeemer from their sins, but as their Deliverer (Messiah) from all their enemies in the day of the Lord, that is yet future.

3. PRESENT TRUTH.

Present truth for us to believe, and for our obedience, will be found in the epistles of Paul written after the book of Acts closes (his prison letters), and God's dealings with Israel as a nation are suspended. This is the truth "to us" today as members of the Body of Christ in the dispensation of the grace of God, and is the fulness (completeness) of God's revelation (Colossians 1:25), or the dispensation of grace of God (Ephesians 3:2). This is the present truth for the one new man which by believing and obedience unto its revelation, will bring us into the "a perfect man, unto the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). This is the unprophesied dispensation of which Paul writes. He states that it is "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and that "which from the beginning had been hid in God." Present truth concerns itself with the Church which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places, blessed with all spiritual blessings, accepted in the Beloved, and raised up together and seated together with Him. This is the Present truth to keep in remembrance and in which we are to be established. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel . . ." (Colossians 1:23).

Ephesians-Philippians-Colossians then are filled with **Present truth peculiar to this dispensation which is "to us,"** and is given **for our faith and obedience.**

Present truth concerns us with the full revelation of God's truth. There will be no more revelation as it is complete. **Present truth as revealed in these epistles is for our obedience.** Both circumcision and baptism are no longer outward physical acts, but spiritual acts performed by the Holy Spirit in the inward man. Sign gifts have passed away and have been replaced by the Head of the Body giving to every member a function within the Body. We are told of our position and what is expected of us for obedience (Ephesians 4:1-6:24; Colossians 3:1-4:6); and they are found in all four chapters of Philippians in various places. We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by practicing the sevenfold unity given to us. While 1 Corinthians 13, defines love, Ephesians 5:2, tells us to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us . . ." While the Acts saints await their coming Messiah and Deliverer with the promise of earthly blessings, i.e. Past truth, the Present truth Body awaits it's appearing with their glorious Head (Colossians 3:4; Titus 2:13).

Present truth does not confuse "even the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7), or "having forgiven you all trespasses" (Colossians 2:13), with Past truth "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Present truth does not practice the ordinances of water baptism and communion or keep any laws because they are now Past truth. Present truth realizes the one baptism by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, the church of the Mystery. Present truth realizes its identification into the Body of Christ, the one new man, and not into the new creation. Identification does not change, but into what entity we are baptized does change as a comparison of Romans 6 with Ephesians 2:4-6 will reveal. **Present truth lives in pure grace.** Present truth possesses it's inheritance in the heavenlies now and does not live in expectation of the creation of a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

4. TRUTH FOR APPLICATION.

While there is Eternal, Past, Present and Future truth, there is also the blessing of applying the truth and the promises of God from all the Scripture. By this I mean that I can take any truth in the Word of God and make it my own. **This does not necessarily mean that I find truth for obedience, but truth for my blessing.** I can take Noah, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, the three men in the fire furnace, and say their God is my God, He will also deliver me. Who of all ages has not found comfort and encouragement, "wait on the Lord" (Psalm 1;1,2; 27:14); "delight & commit" (Psalm 37:4,5); "who daily loadeth us with benefits" (Psalm 68:19); and the truths of Proverbs 3:5-6; Isaiah 40:31; Jeremiah 33:3; and on and on?; and Peter's experiences of impetuousness and failures and forgiveness. We have Paul's trials and deliverances as our encouragement. Yet we must avoid taking truth which pertains to another dispensation, such as Matthew 5-7, and try to make it Present truth, instead of leaving it as Future truth for a coming kingdom.

We find our rule of life, our directions for living our life for His glory in the PRESENT TRUTH. I cannot live my life pleasing to God today from the 4-Gospels. The truth I need for my obedience is found in the epistles of Paul written after the Acts period closed. May God give us the grace to walk in PRESENT TRUTH and to walk WORTHY of this high and holy calling as members of the church which is His Body.