

Chapter 3 - Created to Live in Truth

The Most Practical and Urgent Necessity

With the Lord, walking in truth is not a luxury; it is the most practical and urgent necessity. Our spirits and our whole beings require truth in the same way that our bodies require air to breathe. We are made to live in truth, and when we do not, it is our whole beings that suffer. We can see the extent of the damage being done to our bodies by pollution in every aspect of the environment we live in. A continuous stream of impurity in everything we eat and drink and breathe constitutes an assault on every system of the body. The effect is the same when the pure spiritual atmosphere of truth is polluted with insincerity, guile, manipulation and deceit. And it only takes a little leaven to leaven a whole lump.

The whole human organism rebels against hypocrisy and lies. I may succeed in convincing myself that I am eating real food, at least enough to get my mouth to swallow it, but my body is wiser than my mouth. The digestive organs have no taste buds; their responses cannot be determined by how something tastes for the moment. They respond only to the real inner substance of what comes down to them, and they know, infallibly, whether it is true food or not. My innermost parts are just as honest in their response to insincerity and pretense. No matter how much I may tell myself that I am walking in truth, the inner parts cannot be deceived. The soul and spirit recoil from and rebel against a diet of untruth. Where do depression, anxiety, ulcers, and breakdowns come from? Are they completely unrelated to a life full of pretense and insincerity? Have they nothing at all to do with the wincing and contraction I feel far beneath my smile and mindless acknowledgment when someone tells me he loves me, and I know in my innermost part that he really does not? When I feign love, when I respond to a prayer as if sincere when I know it is not, or to a word of prophecy as if genuine when I know it is not, what effect does that have on my body and spirit? Every lie dulls the mind, confuses the emotions, and blunts the spirit of the one expressing it as well as the one receiving it, while adding to the unreality and untruth of the atmosphere we all breathe and depend upon for our lives together.

The world around us is cut off from the Spirit of Truth, and, as a result, it is choking to death on its own lies. Surely we would be fools to think that within the Church we could confine truth to our doctrines and still expect to live. We may be speaking truth, but even so, and in fact, all the more so, if we are not living it, then we will increasingly become the ravaged victims of the spirit of the lie.

The Leaven of Hypocrisy

When my way of comprehending truth changes, something else necessarily changes at the same time, and that is my way of perceiving the nature of untruth. If I see truth as only verbal and doctrinal, then I am sure to be seeing untruth as only verbal and doctrinal. The moment I realize that truth is a spirit that expresses itself in every area of life, the awareness comes also that untruth is, in essence, a spirit.

Jesus described the hypocrisy of the Pharisees as leaven for a very good reason. Hypocrisy is not merely an outer shell or mask over the surface of things, but an inner force intermixed with the whole substance of a life. When has a lump of dough only been leavened on its surface? The fact of the matter is that the outer surface may well be the last area to be affected. I can become a hypocrite even while the verbal surface of my life remains true, if my inner life becomes false. "Beware of the leaven of hypocrisy." Jesus' warning was aimed at the ever-present tendency to neglect truth in the inward parts and let the leaven, the spirit of the lie, corrupt one's walk. When that happens, the outer veneer of truth that remains becomes mask and a lie—the whitened sepulcher concealing a dead man's bones. And so, if I am not living truly, my speaking truths makes my condition worse, not better, because it hides the corruption beneath the surface until finally my words and doctrines themselves are corrupted from within and are transfigured into lies.

When Adam and Eve believed the serpent's lie in the garden, it was far more than their theology that was changed. The consequences of receiving that first lie into the heart of humanity have extended into every area of life, and even into nature itself. Every human institution has been leavened from within: politics, economics, psychology, religion, work, family. Nothing has escaped, although outward surfaces may retain every appearance of truth, objectivity and morality. The lie is a wolf that, by its very nature, always wears and very meticulously grooms sheep's clothing.

The Clash of Kingdoms

The clash of truth with untruth is not a verbal confrontation, not a cosmic debate to be won by the contestant who scores the most points in an argument. Rather, it is a clash of kingdoms, which are wholly opposed in ways of living, relating, conducting businesses, being wives and husbands, etc. True words alone cannot contend with the subtle and all-pervading spirit of untruth. In order to oppose the lies, Christians and the Church at large need to be true. The new humanity, the Church, needs to be as total an expression of truth as the old humanity is an expression of a lie. The Spirit of Truth is the distinctive of the believer, and of the Church of believers, as opposed to the world. It is, therefore, the distinctive of heaven as opposed to hell, of the new creation as opposed to the old, in the midst of which it has been placed.

What sort of evangelism follows from such a picture of truth in the midst of lies? From the beginning it manifested itself in the cry, **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Mt 3:2 NAS)** and thousands were snatched out of the old and into the new creation. **"Be saved from this perverse generation," (Ac 2:40 NAS)** Peter urged, and that is just what men did! What was the power and authority that caused those words to penetrate and break the grip of the lies and deception and darkness into which they were spoken? When men cried out, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!" those hearing repented because the kingdom was at hand. There was a living declaration of it already present, a new Israel in which there was no guile. How much power is there going to be in my declaration, if in my life there remains guile and pretense and all the same manifestations of the spirit of the lie that captivates the world?

"Save yourselves from this perverse, twisted generation." Come out from a whole life, a whole humanity, a whole world that is being suffocated and devoured by unreality and lies. Come out of death and into life; out of lies and into clarity and truth; out of extortion and greed and into unfeigned love. This is the good news that the Church is commissioned to proclaim, but it is seldom sounded today, and when it is, it is most often lacking in penetrating power. Our evangelism is the projection of our Christian experience. When salvation has actually been a translation out of one creation into another, out of a kingdom of darkness into one of light, we can sense the difference. When salvation is being daily experienced as

something far less than that, we can sense that also—regardless of the words that are employed.

If our evangelism has become shallow, then it is only because our Christianity has become shallow. If our evangelism has become mechanical and predictable, then more than likely so have our lives as believers. If our proclamation of the good news is merely verbal and formalized, then that is a sure sign that truth has become mere words and formulas in our daily walk. I cannot draw someone to a place I am not in myself. We can always *speak* the proclamation; to do so requires only that we remember the correct words. However, in order to move men, we need also to *be* the proclamation, and that requires a life immersed in the Spirit of Truth.

Jesus knew very well that right words alone were not enough. His followers already had all the right words when He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem for the power to turn those words into life:

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (Ac 1:8 NAS).

What is the power to be a witness of Him? The Spirit came and gave the words to speak and the boldness to speak them and the miracles to confirm them, but being a witness entails more than being able to testify. We continually lapse into the mistaken notion that being a witness is something that we *do*, apart from something we *are*. This mistaken notion of ours follows from another more fundamental error, which is our belief that the Holy Spirit was sent to the Church on Pentecost as power, apart from His essential nature—the Spirit of Truth.

While the Spirit did fall as power, He also came as the Spirit of Christ Himself, the very Spirit of Truth by which alone we can be a living demonstration, a witness of the truth. The power that the newborn Church was commanded to wait for was, and still is, the Spirit of Truth.

Being Right vs. Being Real

The world is suffering from its calculated indifference to truth. How are we going to bring it healing if we are indifferent to truth ourselves? As Christians, we can be very exacting about sin, as we ought to be, but we go on as if we did not consider pretense and

guile to be sin as well. There has been too much pretending in Christendom, too much withholding of ourselves, too much putting on a brave face and whistling in the dark. We have for too long gone on saying the customary words while our hearts were out of tune with our professions. *We* have succeeded at being "right" but have failed at being real.

God has been very merciful and patient with us. He has a great compassion for our fears and weaknesses, but He has given us a power to be real, and He has the right to expect us to live by it. He has waited long for us, but we should not expect Him to wait forever. It is going to take a painful, fearful adjustment for many of us to begin to walk in truth, but what is the alternative? Our health requires it, our sanity demands it, and our very lives depend upon it, for a life that is not true is not life.