

Chapter 4 - The Holy Spirit of Truth

Truth Commanded...and Promised

It is a principle with God that when He requires something of us He also provides the means of fulfillment. Every commandment is at the same time a promise. **"Thou shalt love"** is the ultimate requirement and the summation of all of the law. To feel its full weight is to crumble in despair of ever fulfilling it. However, under the new covenant, this very same requirement is transformed into a promise that produces hope and life. "Thou shalt love." What is it that makes the difference? What transforms this requirement into a living hope? Paul called it a mystery, hidden throughout the ages, now revealed to us: Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col 1:27).

My experience with a commandment of God is what determines how I will experience His provision for fulfilling it. The hope of glory will continue to be a veiled mystery to me as long as I conceive of my goal as well, as God's intention, as something less than glory. The apostle Paul was a man who had lived with the law for his whole life and was quite satisfied that he had been fulfilling it. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee, holding to the strictest and most scrupulous interpretation of God's requirements. As far as the righteousness of the law was concerned, he described himself as blameless (Phil 3:5-6). Then something happened. **"When the commandment came...I died." (Ro 7:9)**. I thought I had comprehended its requirement. I thought that the measure of provision I had was sufficient to fulfill it, but then the law fully came. The extent of what it required was suddenly unveiled, and I saw how far it exceeded my ability to ever attain it. Unless a greater provision for fulfillment can be found, there is no hope.

This is exactly our situation when we come face to face with the divine requirement to walk in truth. **"Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor." (Eph 4:25 NIV)**. We never realized what was being demanded of us. We never imagined that this meant something more than abstaining from conspicuously speaking lies to one another. Then the commandment fully came, and we saw how deep and subtle falsehood was. We experienced God's requirement, penetrating to

the innermost parts of our being and extending to every aspect of our lives. Truth, like righteousness, is far more than we thought it was. In fact, *everything* about God is far more than we thought it was. How, then, are we going to be able to walk in truth? The veil has been pulled back, and the full meaning of the commandment has been revealed, while at the same time a whole new depth of meaning to a divine promise has been revealed. **"I will pray to the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter...even the Spirit of Truth...He will guide you into all truth." (Jn 14:16-17, 16:13).** What a requirement! What a promise! What a provision!

Jesus said, **"It is expedient for you that I go away."** (Jn 16:7). How many of us really believe that? Have you ever wished He were present in the flesh, that you could see Him and talk with Him just as the first disciples did? If we were honest, we would probably say that it would be very expedient if He had remained and ruled and judged as a king on the earth. He could have objectively answered every theological question, settled every debate, conclusively proved how right we and our denomination (or non-denomination) really are. In fact, in our candor, we might even suggest that departing was the least expedient thing He could have done. He left us His Word, but He did not leave us anyone to say whose interpretation of it is the right one. How is it expedient for us that He went away?

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth

Until His commandment strikes home, until His intention for us dawns upon our hearts, it will not be expedient for us that He has gone. While I see truth as essentially consisting of doctrines and theologies, my greatest need is for an objective, external Christ to objectively decide for me between truth and error. The same is true of the man who still believes that righteousness consists essentially in doing the right thing. For him, the most useful provision God could make would be an elaborately detailed statement of law, applying it to every possible situation. It is only when my comprehension of truth and righteousness is radically broadened and deepened that I begin to agree with Jesus that it is good that He departed. **"It is expedient for you that I go away...if I go...the Comforter...will...come unto you."** (Jn 16:7 KJV). For the man who sees that truth is something to be in the innermost part, the only provision that could possibly meet his profound need is the very Spirit of Truth within. Our need for holiness, for power, and for comfort, all point to one provision: Christ in us, the hope of glory. What seems tragically to escape our notice is that this Christ in us,

this Comforter, this Spirit of Holiness and Power is the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit that fell on Pentecost was and still is the Spirit of Truth.

Jesse Penn-Lewis, observed that, "The name 'Comforter' depicts His (the Spirit's) work, but His name the 'Spirit of Truth' describes His essential character; therefore, all that He does in and for men as the 'Comforter' He must do in accordance with His character as the Spirit of Truth." (Jesse Penn-Lewis, *The Spirit of Truth*, Page 4, Overcomers Literature Trust, 3 Munster Rd., Parkstone, Pool, Dorset, England).

Whatever God's Spirit does in terms of comfort, empowerment, counsel, and encourage, He can do only as the Spirit of Truth. If we are indifferent or resistant toward truth, it is not only truth that we will lack, but everything that the Spirit of Truth was intended to convey. It is vain to expect Him to come to us as comfort when He is being rejected as truth. God cannot give false comfort. God cannot feign love. Everything He does is an expression of who He is, and He must be true to Himself. The Spirit is the Spirit of Truth because God is the God of Truth.

If I am receiving a comfort that sidesteps truth, I need to seriously question the nature and source of that comfort. My need for consolation in affliction and suffering is very real, but my need for truth is always as great, if not greater. It is no mercy to allow someone to continue in illusions and lies. I may desire such a mercy, but God loves me too much to extend it. His comfort always comes with truth. It is the truth that keeps comfort from becoming fuel for my self-pity. It is the truth that keeps power from feeding my pride and lust for glory. In the end, according to Paul the apostle, men perish not because they would not receive a love of power or a love of comfort, but **"because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."** (II Th 2:10 NIV).

Desiring the Guileless Transparency of Jesus

To love truth is to desire the guileless transparency of Jesus more than anything else. It needs to be a very powerful desire, because along with that transparency comes some things we may very strongly want to escape and refuse. Receiving a love for truth, and the Spirit who is truth, means facing the prospect of life without recourse to exaggeration or "white" lies or flattery, or anything I have grown accustomed to employing in order to enlarge or to protect

myself. It means playing no roles, assuming no poses. That, frankly, frightens most of us. The Spirit of Truth is going to lead us into all truth, even the parts that may humiliate us before men, leave us painfully uncertain and perplexed, and shatter our false images of ourselves, others, and ultimately of God Himself. That may not be what we were hoping for. We were looking for something far more quiet and safe and much less costly. Receiving the love of truth and the Spirit who leads us into all truth inevitably means a measure of suffering, because disillusionment, uncertainty and humility are all forms of suffering—and suffering is what I desperately want to avoid! I will avoid it at all cost, even at the cost of truth itself, unless I love truth even more than I fear it. It is not ignorance that keeps us from becoming true; it is cowardice.

He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (Rev 21:7-8 NAS).

Love of Truth Casts Out All Fear

The cowardly and the unbelieving are spoken of in one breath because at the heart of cowardice is a refusal to believe and trust God, who calls us to walk in truth. Truth is the only atmosphere in which faith and sanity can thrive and in which true comfort can be found. God never hides the fact that truth is at times painful to experience, just as He Himself is. On the other hand, He gives us every reason to love and trust truth, just as He gives us every reason to love and trust Himself. When I hesitate and withhold my trust, I am implying that a measure of shadow and pretense is necessary if I am to survive. I, in effect, declare that the Comforter is unable to comfort me in the undiluted light of truth and that God needs to evade His own nature in order to console me. Few ever let such thoughts become conscious, but conscious or not, once formed and inwardly affirmed, they make me a coward and an unbeliever, a lover of shadows and lies.

I begin a coward, and I end an idolater. If God is truth, if the Spirit of Truth is His Spirit, then who am I worshipping if I refuse to love and walk in the Spirit of Truth? Many will be there on that day when all illusions and shadows are removed by the full presence of Jesus, and they will protest that they performed many great works and preached many doctrinally correct sermons in His name. He will not

deny their claims; He will only say, "I never knew you." You were never vitally joined with Me. You never loved My Spirit. You dreaded truth and never loved it or Me.

Our cowardice keeps us from the comfort we desperately need. We spare ourselves the pain of truth, but it is a pain attended by an altogether unique and healing comfort. **"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth."** (Jn 16:12-13 NAS). He is also a comforter, and He alone can make all truth bearable. Without the Spirit of Truth, we are left with only a false comfort. False comfort is a way around suffering. True comfort is the way through it. False comfort can never lead to the Father because it is, after all, an expression of untruth, just as true comfort is an expression of truth itself. False comfort, like false anything, leads only to bondage, not freedom; it leads to the father of lies, not the Father of Light.

We can refuse to love truth. Such a refusal does not consist of a singular, all-at-once act. It is, rather, the cumulative effect of a lifetime of choosing lies and half-truths, of preferring comfort over truth, of preferring a safe and painless way above the leading of the Spirit. When the Spirit comes to lead us out of an illusion, out of half-truth and into the whole truth, what is our response? Do we prefer the security of the convenient and familiar? Do we cling to the partial knowledge that has served us so well? Or do we welcome Him and in obedience, however costly, follow Him where we would never care, or dare, to go ourselves; that is, into all truth? It is how we walk daily that makes us either lovers of truth or cowards in flight from it.