

Chapter 5 - Truth in Character and Conduct

The Lowly Jordan

Invitations to the mountaintop are very popular. Invitations to the Jordan, however, are seldom sought after. If someone is seeking after the Spirit of Truth, it is in the valley, not on the mountaintop, that he finds what he is looking for. Jesus knew that He required the Spirit in perfect fullness in order to accomplish all that was set before Him. He knew that the way of the Lord prepared for Him was John's baptism and the stark humility that it signified. For Him, though He spoke with Elijah himself on the mountaintop, John was 'Elijah' down in the valley. **"If you are willing to accept it," Jesus said, "he [John] is the Elijah who was to come." (Mt 11:14 NIV).** If you have an unquenchable longing to see the Lord's way prepared in your own life, if you desire truth in the innermost parts, if you desire to stand before the Pilates of this age as living expressions of truth, then John will be to you Elijah. Those who desire less than the Spirit without measure will not perceive John as Elijah, nor will they perceive the lowly Jordan as the place where the Spirit must be found. But if this lowly place was where the sinless Son of God had to begin, then how can we imagine it possible for us to begin anywhere else or any other way?

John attracted some large crowds. Many came out from Jerusalem to see him. Some were merely curious. Some were just gathering notes for seminary research papers on repentance or for next Sunday's sermon. The ones who were there looking for truth were the ones who came, left everything false behind, and walked out into the water to be baptized. That kind of repentance is the fruit and the sign of a longing after truth and the God of truth. Until we have resolved to walk in truth, free from all deception, we will remain back in our own Jerusalem, or we will come to see John out of curiosity, not truly perceiving him at all. But once that resolve is made, it inevitably leads beyond the banks and into the waters of the Jordan.

Truth: The Character of Christ in Us

The first step down to the place where the Spirit descends upon human flesh is the realization of our great need and the birth of a pure, holy hatred for our own pretenses and hypocrisies. Such longing after truth and such a hatred of all forms of the lie is the stirring of the character of the Son of God in us. It is upon that character alone that the dove from heaven descends and abides. It instinctively recognizes an identity, a kinship with the character of Christ. Upon such a character and in such a humble place, the Spirit can come down in His fullness and express not just His attributes and gifts, but His very nature and essence, which is truth.

At the same time that the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended as a dove and alighted on Jesus, the voice of God sounded from heaven, **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mt 3:17 NAS)**. The Father chose this moment to declare His pleasure. His expression of pleasure did not come because of anything that Jesus had done. Jesus had not yet done anything; His ministry, as such, had not yet begun. God's greatest joy, like John's, is to see His children walking in truth. The Father's pleasure was, and is, in His Son's character, in what He *is*, above and before what He *does*. All that Jesus did, all the authority that He had, flowed from who He was. Even if it were possible to duplicate or even exceed Jesus' deeds, it would remain impossible to gain His authority or to know the Father's joy in any way other than by walking in truth as His beloved Son.

God reserved His Spirit and His audible voice of approval for the moment of Jesus' baptism; He reserved the revelation of His Son's identity to John for that moment as well. Jesus' identity was so bound up with the Spirit of Truth that the Baptist was not permitted to recognize him by anything else, even though as a blood relative, none had greater reason to know Him in the flesh.

And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water...And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one...' And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God. (Jn 1:31-34 NAS)

Jesus was likely no stranger to John. Their mothers were cousins. They may have grown up not far from each other. John was most probably in a position to observe Jesus. Yet, nothing natural in itself counted as a sign of who Jesus was. Being a close relation was of no help to John, and God did not designate any miraculous works as definitive signs of who Jesus was. The works later confirmed

what only character could reveal. It was the coming down, and not just that, but the abiding of the Spirit, that constituted God's chosen sign to John that Jesus was the expected Messiah. What John witnessed was not a momentary conjunction, not a passing touch of the Spirit to meet a moment's need, but a lasting union, a unity of essence and character.

It was not enough for John to see the Spirit touch Jesus, just as it is not enough for our contemporaries to see the Spirit occasionally touch the Church today. What John saw was the Spirit descending and abiding on human flesh. He saw the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, so at one with a man's character that He could remain and reside with him. The skeptics and the seekers who observe the conduct of Christians need to see the same thing.

Humility and Repentance

John said that he came baptizing in order that Jesus might be made manifest to Israel. Israel needed to be to repent and be baptized in order to be able to see their Messiah, but John also baptized Jesus Himself. Was it any less essential that Jesus be baptized in order for Him to be made manifest? We wait for those "stubborn Jews" to finally see the true meaning of all the Old Testament messianic prophecies and to succumb, along with the Gentile world, to our evangelistic programs. However, perhaps Jews and Gentiles and God Himself have been waiting for us to be made manifest as children of God who walk in truth. We have been content in our Christian "Jerusalem" to point to all sorts of signs as proof of a living Christ.

For the most part, the world, and most especially Israel, has not been convinced. We are waiting for them to somehow be induced to enter into the waters of humility and repentance in order to be able to recognize our Christ and His Church, but perhaps Israel has come only as far as the banks of the Jordan, and their salvation awaits *our* entrance into the water, as Jesus Himself entered. Israel, along with the rest of the skeptical world, needs first to see the Church made manifest, stripping off its pomp and pretense, coming down out of its high places to the lowly valley of the Jordan, submitting to a washing in humility and repentance. When Israel and the world can see the Spirit of Truth descend and abide upon the Church and hear the Father say to the Church, **"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth,"** (Mt 3:17; III Jn 4)

perhaps then they will be induced to enter the waters of repentance themselves and to believe.

The Patience of the Dove

The baptism of Jesus was not the first example in Scripture of a dove finding an earthly place in which to abide. The very earth itself was submerged in a watery tomb in Noah's day. After the rain had ceased, Noah released two birds from the ark. One was a raven. It never returned. Though the floodwater had not receded, the raven was apparently content to land upon any remnant of the old, judged earth that might happen to float. The other bird returned to the ark. Unlike the raven, it found no place to rest its feet. It was a far more particular kind of bird. "Just anything" would not do. It required a place in keeping with its own impeccable character. It was a dove. Only after the floodwater receded and a renewed earth emerged did that dove find a place to abide.

That dove must have had extraordinary patience. After being so long in the ark, it must have longed to live again unconfined. Yet, it would not seize the first opportunity it had to roost in any old thing. How long was the Spirit from heaven waiting patiently for the coming of Jesus? Has the character of the dove changed since Noah's day? Has He become less patient and less particular? Has He become so weary of circling over the remains of our old humanity that He has finally contented Himself to take up residence with anything that floats? His character has not changed. The presence of gifts and manifestations with us is not proof to the contrary. The dove may graciously touch and give gifts, apparently indiscriminately, but He remains very discriminating when it comes to finding a place to fully abide, so as to express His character.

Noah required great patience as well. The storm was over and the sun was shining again. After more than seven months of confinement, the ark came to rest on a mountaintop, and Noah had waited. God was the One who closed the door to the ark, but it was Noah's decision when to open it. He let the dove be his sign that the time had come. In a sense, Noah had no choice but to wait for dry land to appear. For us, the choice is harder. We are saved and baptized. Why wait any longer? Why submit to yet more restraint and limitation? Can't we assume that God will bless whatever we do, however we do it?

Truth's Lovers Wait

Our impatience is our undoing and the revelation of our heart. The problems and needs that surround us are too great, too pressing. Our personal lives, our families, our churches cry out for solutions, for something that will work to produce a measure of order and stability. There are financial pressures, there is a world to evangelize, there is a marriage to salvage, there is a watching world needing to be impressed that this Christianity we profess is genuine. Under such circumstances, who could wait? Is it really so wrong to pretend or exaggerate just a little bit, to grab hold of some of the old proven ways and devices that worked so well in the past and still work in the world around us?

In fact, wouldn't it be "super-spiritual" and irresponsible to wait any longer? The only thing that will induce us to wait, the only thing that can restrain us from stepping out of the ark and taking hold of some floating residue of our old humanity, is an impassioned love for truth and a hatred of everything tainted by lies. Without such an inner restraint, we will be quick to grasp what we can, willing to feign feelings and manipulate others. And when we do, it is not the dove that we will find abiding there with us, but a much less patient, much less particular "bird"!

One whole book of the New Testament is devoted to the Acts of the Apostles, but, interestingly, the Book of Acts begins in complete inactivity. The Cross is history, Jesus is resurrected, and the disciples have come to believe in Him, yet Luke writes that, **"Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait." (Ac 1:4 NAS)**. Waiting is never easy. It is a form of suffering, and it is all the more acute when one is surrounded by danger and need. Yet, after three years of the most intense, personal experience with Jesus and after forty days of instruction on the kingdom from the risen Lord, here they were required to wait. Jesus was convinced that the task before them was too great to be fulfilled on the basis of their knowledge and experience. They were told to wait for power, not so much to "do witnessing" as to be witnesses (Ac 1:8). The requirement to *be* is always far greater and more demanding than the requirement to *do*!

The number of days that Jesus instructed His disciples about the kingdom is the same as the number of days it rained while Noah was in the ark. Perhaps hearing about the kingdom directly from Jesus is less like a school than a baptism, in which all of our known

conceptions of the kingdom, the Church, and our witness are washed over and purged. If we could experience that sort of instruction, we would be much more disposed to wait; we would be unable to do anything but wait for power from above.

It is Not for You to Know

What did Jesus teach during those forty days? If only Luke had recorded at least some of His words, we might have the answers to some of the perplexing questions that believers have asked ever since. But Luke tells us nothing more; he only records the questions that the disciples asked after Jesus was finished teaching them and Jesus' responses to those questions. **"Is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Ac 1:6 NAS)**. We can easily put ourselves in their place: What about the rapture, Lord? When exactly is the tribulation? What exactly does "all Israel shall be saved" mean? Are these the Last Days? We all want to know, and there is nothing wrong with a concern for such questions. But of still greater concern is Jesus' answer to the disciples: **"It is not for you to know...but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses." (Ac 1:7-8 NAS)**. Knowledge is not primary. Receiving power to be witnesses of Him is not dependent upon the "how" and "when" of the kingdom. I do not have to first know all the truths, but I do have to be true.

"It is not for you to know" can be very hard to take for an answer, especially when you think you already know. What terrible irony it is that our knowledge, even, and especially about end time and kingdom things, can be the greatest obstacle to becoming witnesses of Him. "Not knowing" may well be a necessary condition for being the living instruments that God can use to bring His purposes to pass. Not knowing frees a man from the self-consciousness of his place and role that can cripple him spiritually. Not knowing is a divine antidote to the poison of spiritual pride. Knowledge of end time truths and kingdom principles can ironically make a person less true; it can render one's vocabulary stilted, hollow, and predictable; it can eclipse the very spontaneity and childlikeness of spirit that the reality of the kingdom requires. Hearing Jesus say, "it is not for you to know" has the power to bring even the greatest of disciples to a halt. Pentecost was never intended to empower us to bear witness to our knowledge. It was intended to empower us to be witnesses of Him.

The path to the upper room, like the one Jesus followed to the Jordan, led down, not up. The men left waiting that last ten days in Jerusalem had all been brought low, profoundly humbled. Every one of them could recall the still recent experience of having denied Jesus. They had all said they were prepared to die with Him, and they had all had their own illusions about themselves shattered. By the time they reached the upper room, they were reduced to truth and hence were prepared to receive the Spirit of Truth in full measure and in His deepest self-revelation. Pentecost would have made them only "Pentecostals," witnesses *of* Pentecost, but not witnesses *of* Jesus, if they had not first walked a path down, as to the Jordan, to get to the upper room.

In Israel's history, profound transitions occurred when the Israelites passed through bodies of water. Israel entered Canaan by crossing the Jordan and left Egypt by crossing through the Red Sea. The departure from Egypt was so abrupt, so total, that they could not even bring leaven along for their bread. A Christian's baptism marks at least as great a transition. It is an exodus from the old world through water, and it ought to be just as total and incisive. One very good measure of just how profoundly radical a transition redemption has been in our lives is to sample the bread we are feeding each other and ourselves. Was our passage through the waters of baptism so casual and indifferent as to permit us to bring along some leaven for our bread?

Leaven Renders Truth a Lie

Before we boast too quickly about our redemption and the gifts of the Spirit in our midst, we ought to consider Paul's words to the believers in Corinth:

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven...but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor 5:6-8 NAS).

If the bread of our feast, the bread of our fellowship and service and worship, still contains the leaven of pretense, of feigned love, and of insincerity, then in what are we boasting? At issue is not the quantity of leaven, but its very presence. It only takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump. It only takes a little pretense, a little simulation, to

render the whole loaf of our relationships and our worship a lie. How abrupt and how total has our redemption been if we have had the time and inclination to bring some of the old leaven along with us? "Clean out the old leaven," Paul said. All the leaven in Israel had to be purged before they could celebrate the feast of their redemption. The feast cannot be celebrated with leavened bread—only with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. We might be able to simulate the feast, to perform it correctly, but it is impossible to truly celebrate our redemption and our Redeemer in the absence of sincerity and truth.

The Leaven of Pretense and Insincerity

If, even after crossing through the waters of our own baptism, our bread is still leavened with pretense and insincerity, then it is fair and necessary to ask ourselves to what degree the heavenly dove still abides with us. How much of our spiritual gifts, raised hands and religious activity have ceased to be a living expression of the Spirit and become, instead, a form of leaven, a substitute for a grieved dove that has had to retract and withdraw? A little leaven leavens the whole lump! Lies cannot be quarantined. Feigned love for a brother leads to feigned worship towards God. And the dove from heaven cannot abide where lies abound. In the absence of that dove, we are forced to find some alternative, to imitate and pretend, and thereby spread the leaven and drive the Spirit into an ever-smaller recess in our lives. If we have found a way to go on and maintain an appearance of the Spirit, then that is not to our credit; rather, it is a sign of our failure and shame. We certainly are not fooling God. If we would stop and consider, we would be forced to admit that we really are not even fooling ourselves.

The Cost of Purging the Old Leaven

Purging the old leaven is going to be painful and costly. It means leaving everything that has "worked" behind, including the mere truce that has substituted for genuine peace in our relationships, the bluff and bravado that has served in place of genuine authority. Our personal lives and the history of the Church contain ample evidence of alternatives to truth that "works," but if it "works" and isn't true, then it is worthless. In fact, it is worse than worthless, because it makes us untrue and because we are inevitably going to collide with reality, so that what merely "worked" will all the more devastatingly

fail. It may be a fearful prospect to face our spouses, our children, our congregations, and ourselves without the habitual and convenient lies that have "worked" for so long. Conversely, the prospect of facing reality armed only with lies, having our bluff called at a time when the stakes are real and ultimate, is even more fearful.

A baptism through which leaven can be successfully brought is very suspect. There is something about a thorough baptism that makes a mess of the best hairdos and takes the crease out of our Sunday-best pants. Everything on the surface of our lives, everything that constitutes mere appearance, suffers a mortal blow in the waters of baptism. Passing from the merely verbal to the real is just such a baptism, but it is when one comes up from these waters that one hears the voice of the Father and sees the Spirit descending and abiding!

From Fullness to Power

Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. One would think that this would be the least opportune time to test a man. Paradoxically, however, it was the very presence of the dove that made the temptation so timely and powerful in Jesus' life. According to Scripture, Jesus entered the wilderness in the fullness of the Spirit. Scripture also says not that Satan lured Him, but that the very Spirit that had just come upon Him in the Jordan had led Him there (Mt 4:1). The first consequence of being filled with the Spirit was not what we would expect. We would have Jesus come up out of the water and go straight to Jerusalem to proclaim the gospel in great power. Instead, according to Luke, the Spirit led Him into a barren place, alone, to become exhausted of all natural strength, and hungry after forty days of fasting. The Spirit Himself seems to have engineered a set of circumstances that invite temptation, which make it more, not less, appealing, and which make a man more, not less, vulnerable. Why?

The answer lies, at least in part, in God's supreme confidence in His Spirit. The Spirit abiding without limit in a vessel that is true can enable a man to withstand even ultimate temptation. That is how confident God is. How confident are we? How confident am I in the power of truth simply as truth, unaided by favorable circumstances, unsupported by natural strength, to reveal and overcome the most subtle of lies, especially when they come to me at a time when I most need the comfort and power that they offer? What kind of truth and what kind of relationship to it can engender the confidence and

supply the spiritual stamina to withstand lies under such extreme conditions of temptation? Mere verbal truth will not sustain me under that sort of pressure, and if it cannot sustain me in the wilderness, then it will not be able to empower me back in Galilee and in Jerusalem when I go to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel. Jesus was led into the wilderness in the fullness of the Spirit (Lk 4:1). He came out of the wilderness and went into Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Lk 4:14). If there is no fullness going into temptation, then there will be no power coming out of it.

Every need and desire that comes to us, both natural and spiritual, brings with it a temptation to resort to a lie, in order to fulfill it. More often than not, the temptation will come when we are in lonely, barren places, weak and vulnerable. If when temptation comes it finds pride, pretense, compromise, and play-acting in us, it will penetrate our merely verbal defenses and leave us without any real power when we go into Galilee. But if we have just come from the Jordan and have the Spirit abiding in fullness and have the quiet, unshakable assurance of our Father's pleasure, then temptation will work like a catalyst in us, transforming fullness into power. The power of the Spirit becomes a reality in us to the degree that every other false source of power has been resisted and rejected.

Test of Truth: Among Those Who Know Us

"And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit...and He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up." (Lk 4:14,16 NAS).

Nazareth is the last place we would go, unless we were certain of the power of the Spirit. Galilee and Nazareth are significant because they are "where He had been brought up." Jesus went directly to the people who knew Him. The greatest test is always at our doorstep, among those who know our every weakness and blemish, who see us walking out our faith daily. It is easier to bluff and deceive both others and ourselves where we are not known, where no one can look at us and say, "Isn't this Joseph the carpenter's son?" To begin, each of us in his own Nazareth, in his own family and fellowship and workplace, is another matter entirely.

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to

the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:16-18 NAS).

Bluffing vs. Substance

It would be foolhardy for us to go into our own Nazareths today and proclaim that the Lord has anointed us to heal the brokenhearted and set the captives free without the heavenly dove abiding with us in fullness and power as He did with Jesus. **"And He closed the book...and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him."** (Lk 4:20 NAS). So also will the eyes of everyone be upon us when they hear like words coming from our mouths! If we are bluffing by merely mouthing words without the substance behind them, we would do better to not call so much attention to ourselves. The world has grown used to hearing the words and dismissing those who speak them. One penetrating glance is sufficient to reveal that the speaker need not be taken seriously.

When Jesus sat down and everyone fixed his gaze on Him, He did not qualify His words or contrive a strategic verbal retreat. They were calling His bluff, testing His substance. His response was to say, **"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."** (Lk 4:21 NAS).

The broken and captive inhabitants of today's Nazareths are waiting to hear such words again. They need to turn and fix their cynical gaze on the Church and say, not with scorn, but with surprised astonishment, "Isn't this Joseph's son? Aren't these those same Christians who are always riddled with inconsistencies, full of platitudes, and captive to the same greeds and fears as we are? Then what is this fervency of love, this transparency, simplicity and clarity, this evident reality?" May the day come when what was said about Jesus will be said about His Church: **"And they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority."** (Lk 4:32 NAS).

That day needs to come, because there is another day coming when the illusions that men cleave to for a semblance of security and sanity will crumble and dissolve. If men were leaping from windows when the economy staggered into depression in 1929, what will happen to our far softer, more pampered generation when the whole present world system begins to totter and collapse? Everything that can be shaken will be shaken. Everything founded

upon illusions and half-truths and pride and greed and fear will ultimately collide with reality. There will be many more downtrodden and brokenhearted, many more captive and blind and bewildered then. Will the Church be the only remaining source of sanity to turn to and cling to, or will it be as desolate and distraught as the world, suddenly bereft of the same lies and illusions?

When Jesus read from Isaiah He stopped in the middle of a verse. He concluded, **"to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."** That last verse ends, **"and the day of vengeance of our God." (Is. 61:2 NAS)**. We are destined to complete that verse. The world has grown accustomed to the sight of strange men on street corners carrying doomsday placards declaring, "Repent, for the end of the world is at hand!" When the Church is not taken seriously, those who proclaim a coming judgment are taken as fools. That is because men do not see that day coming. They are blind to the pre-dawn light of that day, a light that even now illumines and reveals everything in the world as vanity and lies. The failure to see a lie as a lie has nothing to do with faulty eyesight. A lie is not seen as a lie precisely because it is believed, because too much security and comfort and power is derived from it for the one believing it to allow its delusive nature to be recognized.

The ability to see a lie as a lie has nothing to do with mere verbal understanding of the doctrine of final judgment. The ability to see a lie as a lie comes from not believing it, from rejecting and refusing the security and comfort and power that the lie offers. Do we see biblically and experience the whole world as begotten of a lie? If we do not, then we are as blind as unbelievers, despite our correct words about eschatology. And if those who are leading the blind and preaching the gospel to them and offering them sight are themselves blind, then they can only ultimately fall together into the same ditch.

Judgment: To The Church First

There is a reason why judgment, not just the doctrine of judgment, needs to come first to the Church. The Church needs to have the light of truth shined on its own lies and illusions. It needs to have everything founded on unreality and nurtured in shadows brought crashing down. It needs to see everything in the light, everything, including itself, as it really is, just as God sees it. The light of truth is judgment to everything that is not true. The Church, in so far as it is true, is living in and radiating the light of the day of judgment even

now in the midst of the world. Only such a Church, and such believers, already a living proclamation of the soon-coming day of God's judgment, can proclaim the healing of the broken-hearted and the restoring of sight to the blind.

The light of God's truth changes more than a man's doctrines; it changes the man. Isaiah was already a great prophet, but in the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw something that transformed him. Isaiah saw the Lord in His glory, and the result of that vision was not a treatise or an interesting series of sermons. Isaiah fell as a dead man and cried out that he was a man of unclean lips and that he dwelt among a people of unclean lips. **"Woe is me, I am undone!"** he cried. (**Isaiah 6:5**). He saw as God sees. He saw everything as it really was, and he was undone. Only afterwards could he go and proclaim the words that Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth, words of hope and healing, because he was healed and restored; he could speak words of judgment and wrath because he himself had been purged and judged.

Are we going to be commissioned and anointed to proclaim and perform what Isaiah did while our lips are still unclean with the taint of half-truths and insincerity? Are we going to do greater works than Jesus did by a power less than He had? We may be able to speak about a soon-coming day of judgment, but if we are not already walking in the light of that day, then our words are a mockery of that truth.

Our Deepest Longing and Goal

We are already sons of God, but we do not yet know what we shall be. We do not yet know what it is to be completely like Him (1 Jn 3:2,3), but such a complete likeness is, or at least ought to be, our deepest longing and our goal. We do know that when He comes, we will be like Him, because then we shall see Him as He really is, not clouded by our illusions, fears and desires. If this is one's hope, he will purify himself, even as He is pure. The Church that lives in and by this hope will be purifying itself, speaking truth to one another in love, restoring one another's sight, keeping one another true.

Such a process, always loving, is often painful. The love of truth may require some extreme acts. The day that God consecrated the Levites for His service was the day Moses came down from the mount and found all Israel in debauchery and idolatry. He said, **"Whoever is for the Lord, come to me!"** (**Ex 32:26 NAS**). A small

remnant came and joined him. They had to make a choice as whether to eat and drink and rise up and play, or to follow the Lord, whether to indulge in the consolations of lies, or entrust themselves to truth. To those who joined him, Moses said, **"Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go...in the camp, and kill every man his brother...friend, and...neighbor."** (Ex 32:27 NAS). How much do we love the truth? Do we love it enough to ruthlessly put on the sword and go in and out of the camp, enough to go in and out of our own homes, our own marriages, our own congregations, and our own thought life, to slay everything untrue? Any lesser love is unpriestly.

Therefore, rejecting all falsity...let every one express the truth with his neighbor, for we are all parts of one body and members one of another...For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light...for the fruit...of the Light...[consists] in every form of kindly goodness, uprightness of heart and trueness of life. (Eph 4:25,5:8-9 Amplified).

Trueness of life is the result and the evidence of rejecting all falsity in all of its forms. Like every fruit, it is not something that can be attained by our own striving. Trueness of life can only be produced by the Spirit, whose own essential nature is truth. The way of knowing a tree has not changed. It always has been and always will be by its fruit. If the Spirit of Truth is the sap and the life of the tree, then the fruit will be trueness of life. It is vain to expect to find any other fruits of the Spirit such as love, or faith, or kindness, or humility, without having truth first of all. There is no love, faith, kindness, or humility that is not an expression of trueness of life.

There are no shortcuts to life. The road has not been widened over the centuries. No accumulation of knowledge or experience or good works can add another lane to the road. The way is the truth and the life, and it is exceedingly narrow. This is the one and only road that God calls men to walk on. Widening the road is simply not an option available to us. What is available is the Spirit of Truth to everyone desirous of walking in the truth. God has no greater joy than this, to see His children walking in the truth.