

# ***Buy The Truth, And Sell It Not***

*Proverbs 23:23*

---

*“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, instruction, and understanding.” – Proverbs 23:23.*

---

These topics are ones that seem to be particularly dear to Solomon as he moves through the Book of Proverbs for us:

## ***I. Truth bought***

Though I doubt that Solomon would argue that truth is a commodity that can be obtained in the corner market it seems very clear that he views truth as something that indeed can and must be obtained from outside of ourselves. We need, above all, to recognize that Truth DOES indeed exist, it is not a manufactured thing. It does not change from person to person (as so many in our modern world seem to insist. In this modern day there are a disturbingly large number of teachers who want us to believe that even those who “believe” contradictory things can both be “right” because no one has a handle on truth.

The Scripture is very clear, however, that Truth DOES exist and it MUST be pursued and grasped. We’re told, for instance, that God is a God of Truth with the idea that He and what He has put forth stands as true for all people in all situations. Moses told Israel that God was a God of Truth

---

*Deut 32:4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*

---

What Moses’ intention there is to tell us that all that God says and does can be held to be truth, without any falsehood.

---

*Ps 31:15 My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, And from those who persecute me.*

---

David knew that his God could be depended upon to deliver and take care of him when he needed it. He could leave the matters of his life in God’s “hands” and truth that there was safety there! One might even think a bit about just where it is that ones’ concept that truth even exists in our world. It seems to me that this is one of the great problems and/or causes of modernism in these days. People have cast aside the concept of a God to Whom they are accountable and thus they perceive themselves as the source of what is true; or even that Truth has no meaning apart from God.

But the fact of the matter is that Truth cannot be adequately explained, recognized, understood, or defined without God as its’ source. Since He alone is eternal and self-existent and He alone is the creator of all else, He must be seen and even asserted to be the fountain of all truth. If you don’t believe that, try defining truth without reference to God, and see how quickly all such definitions

fail. The moment you begin to ponder the essence of truth, you are brought face-to-face with the requirement of a universal absolute - the eternal reality of God.

Conversely, the whole concept of truth instantly becomes nonsense as soon as you attempt to remove the thought of God from your mind. That, of course, is precisely how the apostle Paul traced the relentless decline of human ideas in Romans 1:21–22:

---

*“Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart **was darkened**. Professing to be wise, **they became fools.**”*

---

There are serious moral implications, too, whenever someone tries to dissociate truth from the knowledge of God. Paul went on to write,

---

*“Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper” (Roman 1:28).*

---

Abandon a biblical definition of truth, and unrighteousness in ones’ life and thinking is the inescapable result. We see it happening before our eyes in every corner of contemporary society. In fact, the widespread acceptance of homosexuality, rebellion, and all forms of iniquity that we see in our society today is a verbatim fulfillment of what Romans 1 says always happens when a society denies and suppresses the essential connection between God and truth.

If you reflect on the subject with any degree of sobriety, you will soon see that even the most fundamental moral distinctions – good and evil, right and wrong, honor and dishonor—cannot possibly have any true or constant meaning apart from God. That is because truth and knowledge themselves simply have no coherent significance apart from a fixed source, namely, God. How could they? This is because, necessarily, God embodies the very definition of truth. The fact of the matter is that every truth claim apart from Him is preposterous.

In fact, human philosophers have sought for thousands of years to explain truth and account for human knowledge apart from God—and all who have tried have ultimately failed. That has led to an ominous shift in the world of secular thought in recent years. Here’s a thumbnail sketch of how the change came about:

1. Ancient Greek philosophers simply assumed the validity of truth and human knowledge without attempting to account for how we know what we know.
2. But about five hundred years before the time of Christ, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle began to consider the problems of how to define knowledge, how to discover whether a belief is true, and how to determine whether we’re actually justified in believing anything.
3. For some two thousand years, nearly all philosophers more or less presupposed that knowledge is conveyed somehow through nature, and

they set forth a number of naturalistic explanations attempting to describe how truth and knowledge can be communicated in naturalistic, created and investigated fashions to the human mind.

4. Then in the middle of the seventeenth century, at the dawn of the so-called Enlightenment, philosophers such as René Descartes and John Locke began to grapple very seriously with the question of how we gain knowledge.
5. That branch of philosophy became known as “epistemology” - the study of knowledge and how human minds apprehend truth.
  1. Descartes was a rationalist, believing that truth is known by human reason thinking, starting with a few foundational, self-evident truths and using logical deductions to build more sophisticated structures of knowledge on that foundation.
  2. A fellow named John Locke argued, instead, that the human mind begins as a blank slate and acquires knowledge purely through the senses. (Locke’s view is known as empiricism.)
  3. Another, named Immanuel Kant (a early German Philosopher) supposedly demonstrated that neither logic alone nor experience alone (hence neither rationalism nor empiricism) could account for all human knowledge, and he devised a view that combined elements of rationalism and empiricism.
  4. Yet another named G. W. F. Hegel argued in turn that even Kant’s view was inadequate, and he proposed a more fluid view of truth, interestingly denying that reality is even a constant thing. It changed based on the circumstance and perceptions of the one grappling with it!! Instead, he said, what is true evolves and changes with the advancement of time. Hegel’s views opened the door to various kinds of irrationalism, represented by “modern” systems of thought ranging from the philosophies of Kierkegaard, Humanistic & Theological ideas BOTH entirely resting on human experience and perception. If it is true for us...it is true...it doesn’t and likely ISN’T true for everyone! This is the concept of what we call “existentialism” – and speaks of Individual freedom and determinism
6. Another Philosopher, named Friedrich Nietzsche and his thinking gave rise to what came to become known as the “God is dead” idea and what is formally called “Nihilism”. It is cynical of any idea that put reality as beyond human experience and perception. He (and this philosophy) made the claim that there is NOTHING “religious” beyond us. The concept that “God is dead” and so, to put forth any religious concept other than what is simply based on what the individual wants and personally needs, is selfish and necessarily a deliberate lie!
7. Another pretty well-known philosopher was Karl Marx. The political and economic philosophy of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels was that in which the concept of “class struggle” plays a central role in understanding society's allegedly inevitable development from

bourgeois oppression under capitalism to a socialist and ultimately classless society. He held that because this so, the “working class” are tools and slaves of the higher bourgeoisie. So, he put forth that freeing them should be the goal of anyone who is in the wise place socially. One of his points was the religious hierarchy is doing essentially the same thing over their “little people” as the rich do over the working class. This was, by the way, one of the chief ideas that led to the rise of communism in its’ various forms.

8. Another philosopher who has contributed to the struggle over truth today is a fellow named Henry James who we can think of as one of the great American Pragmatists. He held forth that the individual and the inner self and the satisfaction of the self is key. You need to do what satisfies YOU, THAT is what we need to be seeking! Me and my happiness is what MUST be given priority. If I am not happy in a given result or circumstance, then time and effort has been wasted. Re; Religion he did not believe that man owed God any service, but that any religious action was self-oriented and not motivated by God’s authority. James thinking has led to the concept of acting based on my own motivations and/or aimed at pleasing results. What benefits ME?
  - This is one of the CHIEF concepts that has led to modern Theological concepts – especially in the area of “*name it claim it*” theology. God is most concerned with doing what YOU NEED!! If you think and/or speak rightly – you’ll GET what you want/need! YOU have to do...etc.

## A. We Are Abandoning the Quest for Truth

In more recent times, unbelieving intellectuals have admitted the chain is broken and decided that the culprit is the absurdity of any quest for truth at all! In effect, they have given up that pursuit as something wholly futile. The world of human ideas is therefore currently in a serious state of flux. On almost every level of society, we are witnessing a profoundly radical paradigm shift—a wholesale overhaul in the way people think about truth itself. Unfortunately, instead of acknowledging what truth demands and yielding to the necessity of belief in the God of truth, contemporary Western thought has devised ways to rid human philosophy of any coherent notion of truth altogether.

The concept of truth is therefore under heavy attack in the philosophical community, the academic world, and the realm of worldly religion. The way people think about truth is being totally revamped and the vocabulary of human knowledge completely redefined. The endgame, clearly, is to usher every notion of truth into oblivion. The goal of human philosophy used to be truth without God.

Interestingly, today’s philosophies are open to the notion of God without truth—or to be more accurate, personal “spirituality” in which everyone is free to create his or her own god. Personal “gods” pose no threat to sinful self-will, because they suit each sinner’s personal preferences anyway, and they make no

demands on anyone else. That fact underscores the true reason for every denial of truth:

---

*“Men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).*

---

Here the Lord Jesus says people reject truth (light) for reasons that are fundamentally moral, not intellectual. Truth is clear—for most people, it is too clear. It reveals and condemns sin. Therefore,

---

*“...everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (John 3:20).*

---

Sinners love their sin, so they flee from the light, denying that it even exists.

- The war against truth is nothing new, of course. It began in the garden when the serpent said to the woman, *“Has God said ...?”* (Genesis 3:1). A relentless battle has raged ever since—between

- truth and falsehood,
- good and evil,
- light and darkness,
- assurance and doubt,
- belief and skepticism,
- righteousness and sin.

It is a savage spiritual conflict that literally spans all of human history. But the ferocity and irrationality of this present onslaught seems quite unprecedented. The far-reaching ramifications of the recent paradigm shift are obvious already. Over the past generation - and especially the past three decades - we have seen convulsive changes in society’s moral values, philosophy, religion, and the arts. The upheaval has been so profound that our grandparents’ generation (and practically every prior generation of human history) scarcely would have thought the landscape could possibly change so quickly.

Almost no aspect of human discourse has been left unaffected. The traditional, nominal devotion to ideals and moral standards derived from Scripture is dying with the senior generation. Many believe the paradigm shift marks the demise of the modern age and the dawning of a new postmodern era—the next great epoch in the development of human thought. We won’t take the time to examine modernism, its failed demise, and how postmodernism filled that void with even greater errors in the quest for truth.

What we will do is talk about the One Who declared Himself the answer to these issues – the Lord Jesus Christ – in John 8:12... *“I Am the Light of the World”*

---

*12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying,  
“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in  
darkness, but have the light of life.”*

---

This passage addresses a number of the issues we have spoken of so far: the first here is the dramatic and crushing importance of seeing to it that we, not only believe that God and His truth exist, but that do all that is possible to see to it that we “buy” or secure that truth as a part of our lives.

---

*“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, instruction, and understanding.” – Proverbs 23:23.*

---

And so we need, first of all, get sure hold on the two things that we’re developed so far. There is a God in heaven and He has revealed truth for His people to know and understand. We are able to understand it IF we search for it in the manners in which He has made available. Solomon uses the term “Buy” here which can refer to pretty much the entire wealth of manners that something can be acquired; from creating, to building, to finding, to being given, to spending money for the thing in mind. It seems clear that here, he has in mind the idea that, with regard to obtaining the Truth, God’s children much be willing to “spend” or exert whatever it is necessary to be sure that it is in our possession. Effort and time are not what should stand in our way...we must be willing to do whatever is needful to get it in our “hands”.

There is a second idea for us to get in our minds as well, it tells us to be sure that we do NOT allow...

## **II. Truth to be “sold” or cast away**

We’re looking at pretty much the same idea here with one exception. Whereas in the prior discussion, we were talking about the gaining of Truth; here we are seeing that Solomon wants us to see that it is very possible for us to cast truth aside, “selling” it for our gain or benefit; or perhaps even just throwing it away by the side of the road, so to speak. He tells us that we must be completely, as completely sure and we can be that we NEVER do this! We should note that he is NOT saying that this makes truth invalid or non-existent. Many people think precisely this way. As we have already said, there is a real perception these days that truth is really only truth as it is perceived thus by a given individual. As for those who are not a part of that perception...it is NOT truth. My goodness!!

Solomon’s counsel is that we see to it that we keep a good and firm hold on the truth and see to it that it is a good, valuable and guiding part of our lives. What I mean by this, by the way, is that we take care to keep truth a valuable and ongoing part of our regular lives. Reading, studying hearing and living the Word in a daily and personal fashion. We must be sure that it remains a valuable and definite aspect of our manner of living.

## **III. Wisdom gained**

---

*“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, instruction, and understanding.” – Proverbs 23:23.*

---

Solomon adds to what he has already said and goes on to speak of three more aspects of how it is we can make use of the Word of God in our everyday life. He uses the word “also” to connect the first ideas (which we have already spoken of) with what will follow. “Also” is a conjunction, what, in English, we call a “coordinating conjunction” that connects two sides of a statement, connecting two similar or related ideas together to aid the reader in seeing how they relate to each other. Here, it is clear that the first idea tells us of two ideas that have already been put together to form a single idea. Buy truth and do not sell it.

Now he goes on and tells us to treat three other thoughts in the same or similar fashion:

---

*“Buy the truth, and sell it not; **also** wisdom, instruction, and understanding.” – Proverbs 23:23.*

---

He lists wisdom, instruction, and understanding and tells us to treat them in a similar, two phase manner – buy it and don’t sell it! Let’s take a bit of a look at just Solomon has in mind with each of the three of these:

- **Wisdom** – We have talked about this word in other post over time. It is the Hebrew word that speaks technical skill, experience and shrewdness and hence that personal knowledge and ability to perceive and interpret what one sees and becomes aware of and determine what it means and what should be done concerning it.
- He goes on and speaks of **Instruction** – This speaks of what is used to train one to follow after what is right. That may speak of discipline, chastening, chastisement, or warning or even, perhaps exhortation. It obviously a fairly wide range of particular meaning and that leads us to see that the aim of the word is really not what is physically done, but rather what the outcome of the action brings. This makes good sense to us – Solomon tells us that we must be sure to BOTH “buy” and see to it that we do not SELL this instruction (or the Wisdom mentioned already).
- Understanding – In English, speaks of the end result of a given process. We study, investigate, etc., with end result in view. We want to “understand” or arrive at a consistent and true conclusion for a matter. Solomon tells us to seek to “buy” Truth that will aid us in understanding and, likewise, to see to that we do not “sell” it or cast it aside. We should do what is necessary to pay attention, consider, and/or examine the matter so as to see it rightly.

Just by way of summary Solomon is putting forth to us for consideration:

- Instruction as a means by which to gain Wisdom
- Understanding also gained via Instruction
- Also, as an implied thing here, we can see the great importance and preciousness these qualities have in the lives of those who serve the Lord.

By way of rehearsing and summarizing our interpretation - Omitting the word “also,” which is really a part of the word it follows (and implied in those that follow) in the original, we have here three properties of truth enumerated—**“wisdom, instruction, and understanding.”**

- By “wisdom” is meant solid knowledge of God’s Word as opposed to superficial.
- By “instruction,” or “discipline,” moral culture.
- By “understanding,” the faculty of discerning good and evil (Heb. 5:14).

In these truth is to be apprehended, not without pains and sacrifice. And having been so won, no consideration should induce a man to part with her again.

As we frequently see in these sort of verses, the Scripture has a number of illustrations to clarify the intention of the verse. Moses, obtaining the truth as then revealed in Jehovah, and Paul as revealed in God’s dear Son, both, at the cost of all this world could offer them, never parted with it, but, like the three favored Apostles, forsook all to follow it; like the Hebrew Christians, took joyfully, for Christ’s sake, the spoiling of their goods (Heb. 10:34), or what was an equivalent; like all the martyrs, “loved not their lives” (Rev. 12:11) in comparison with the truth. Unlike these, Herod, having truth presented to him, would not have it at the price of his sensuality, nor Pilate at the price of his popularity, nor the young ruler at the price of his wealth. Esau bartered! it for present gratifications; Judas for the price of a field; Demas for some worldly gain.

Just thinking by way of application.—“*I am the Truth,*” says Jesus, and promises the Holy Spirit to “*lead into all truth.*” A sound knowledge of Jesus, His character, His work, His doctrine, is what I should aim at, and hope for, as within reach. And whatever measure of it I attain to, let me hold fast. Thus, have I become convinced of the twofold nature of the Christ—that He is God-man? Let no sneers, or arguments, or appeals to my reason induce me to let go that precious portion of the truth. Am I persuaded that love was an essential element of the character which He set before me as an example? Let nothing hinder me from perpetually striving and praying after Christian charity. Do I really believe in an atonement made upon the cross, and in the continual commemoration of that atoning sacrifice in the Holy Eucharist? Let me hold fast that precious truth, and never give it up, however unpopular it may be. This I shall be more likely to do, if I have not received my religion merely from tradition, but verified each article of it myself, at the cost of labor, self-sacrifice, it may be persecution. How dear to me will Church principles thus bought be! How little likely to be parted with! How strengthened and confirmed by every act in consonance with them!

*And may He who taught me so much teach me more!*

---