

28 January 2024

Truth is Truth

Dear Sisters and Elders,

In the year 1603, William Shakespeare wrote a play titled, “Measure for Measure”. While not one of his most famous plays, it has been repeatedly produced and performed – with the most recent being 2018 in London. It was in this play, that perhaps the earliest written use of the phrase “truth is truth” was discovered. Whether or not it originated with Shakespeare is unknown. The phrase has since been used by prophets, apostles, and many others inside and outside of the Church - and is the topic of this week’s letter.

In 2 Peter 2:1-2, Peter writes to the branches of the church located in Asia Minor, (modern day Turkey), which included the cities of Galatia and Ephesus. In his epistle, he is warning against apostasy and false teachers. *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”*

A “damnable heresy” is an opinion worthy of divine condemnation, and contrary to the doctrine of Christ. This is what was being taught by these “false teachers”. It is Peter’s statement at the end of the second verse that I want to highlight. ***“And many shall follow their ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”*** What is happening here is that these false teachers are coming in and telling them that the truths they have been taught are lies. It is a repetitive and cunning tactic of the adversary, that of calling evil, good; and good, evil. Or said another way, calling truth, error; and error, truth.

We know from Doctrine & Covenants 93:24 that *“... truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come;”* Verse 25 helps us even further when it says, *“And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.”* And that was what was happening to the Saints in Asia Minor. They were being lied to by those who were trying to get some advantage over them. Peter was warning these early Saints about these men and even went so far as to explain what happens to those who discover the truth of the gospel and then are persuaded to turn away from it. *“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”*

In a 1977 talk at BYU, President Spencer W. Kimball clarified in his talk titled “Absolute Truth” that *“absolute truths cannot be altered by the opinions of men. .... If men are really humble, they will realize that they discover, but do not create, truth.”* Let me repeat it again, *“absolute truths cannot be altered by the opinions of men”* and let me add.... though many do try! In fact, Elder Bednar in his October 2014 General Conference address added, *“Absolute truth exists in a world that increasingly disdains and dismisses absolutes”*. I suspect many of you have heard people

say something like, “You have your truth and I have mine”. But we know that is a lie and no matter how many want to believe it; it remains a lie. **Truth is truth!** President Nelson has taught, *“Many now claim that truth is relative and that there is no such thing as divine law or a divine plan. Such a claim is simply not true. There is a difference between right and wrong. Truth is based upon the laws God has established for the dependability, protection, and nurturing of His children. Eternal laws operate in and affect each of our lives, whether we believe them or not.”* (“The Love and Laws of God”, September 2019, BYU Devotional)

In April 1986, President Hinckley used this subject phrase in a talk titled, “Come and Partake” where he spoke about the blessings and power of the restored gospel and Church. He said, *“This restored gospel brings not only spiritual strength, but also intellectual curiosity and growth. **Truth is truth.** There is no clearly defined line of demarcation between the spiritual and the intellectual when the intellectual is cultivated and pursued in balance with the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and strength.”* In other words, truth encompasses both the spiritual and the intellectual. There is no line that separates spiritual truth from secular truth as both have God as their source. Then Elder Russell M. Nelson reaffirmed this in his April 2014 Conference Talk titled, “Let Your Faith Show”. *“I had such a test [a test of faith] decades ago when one of my medical faculty colleagues chastised me for failing to separate my professional knowledge from my religious convictions. He demanded that I not combine the two. How could I do that? **Truth is truth!** It is not divisible, and any part of it cannot be set aside.”* Elder Neil L. Andersen added, *“I believe that **truth is truth**, whether it is in the physical world or the spiritual world. As we discover it and apply it, our lives are more complete. The discovery of spiritual truth is vital to our happiness in this life and beyond. Because it is important for all, God makes it available to all: rich and poor, young and old, educated and uneducated, independent of gender, race, and citizenship.”*

In a world that is confused about what is true, seeking for, learning, and applying truth becomes of paramount importance. Where can we look and have confidence that it is absolute truth we are learning? We read in Doctrine and Covenants 88:45 *“For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”* There are at least two things to learn from this scripture. First, studying the word of God from the scriptures and prophets and apostles will teach us truth; and second, the more truth we learn, the more light we will have which light is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the more truth we learn, the more we become like Christ and the more we are filled with his truths, his light, his power. This is why truth will always be truth because it comes from Jesus Christ. He is the source! It is not surprising then that in Jesus intercessory prayer found in John 17 that he prays to the Father pleading for the apostles, *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”*

In the BYU devotional by President Nelson mentioned above, he assures us that we may know for ourselves what is true and what is not by learning to discern the whisperings of the Spirit. He then quotes Doctrine and Covenants 42:61. *“If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.”*

As full-time missionaries gathering Israel one last time, it is imperative that we know, understand, and apply truth. May we make the 12-week training program (for those in training) and the 26-week study and improvement program (for those not in training) our plan for learning and applying light and truth. May our study of the Topical Guide scriptures on Christ become foundational bedrock upon which we build our lives and desires. May we follow the admonition found in 1 John 4:6, *"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."*

All My Love,

President Kunz