

**"THE WORDS OF THE LORD ARE PURE WORDS, LIKE SILVER TRIED IN
A FURNACE OF EARTH, PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES.
YOU SHALL KEEP THEM, O LORD, YOU SHALL PRESERVE THEM FROM
THIS GENERATION FOREVER." (PSALM 12: 6 & 7)**

www.oakhillministries.org ■ 2115 Graefenburg Road ■ Lawrenceburg, KY 40342
AUGUST 11, 2008

Dear Reader, The following message was written by A. W. Tozer and appeared as an editorial in "The Alliance Witness" between 1960-1963. An expanded collection of brother Tozer's editorials may be found in the book entitled "That Incredible Christian" published by Christian Publications, Inc. I highly recommend that you obtain a copy for your library. Please prayerfully read brother Tozer's message; if received in the heart, it will change your life - - - That is the Truth!

God bless ----- Thomas

“To Be Understood, Truth Must Be Lived”

For a long time I have believed that truth, to be understood, must be lived; that Bible doctrine is wholly ineffective until it has been digested and assimilated by the total life. I have held this to be an important element in the preaching of the Old Testament prophets, and I have felt it to be near to the heart of the moral teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. I admit that this belief has made me a little lonely, for not many of my Christian brethren share it with me. While I have not heard anyone deny the truth outright, few have seen fit to teach it with anything approaching emphasis. And by silence a man will reveal his beliefs as surely as by argument.

This is one of those truths which at first may appear dull and colorless, but far from being tame or weak, this truth is of tremendous importance to all of us. While not to my knowledge formulated as a tenet in the creed of any church or school of religious thought, it nevertheless stands as a great divide To separate those who think rightly about the faith of Christ from those who think carelessly about it.

The essence of my belief is that there is a difference, a vast difference, between fact and truth. Truth in the Scriptures is more than a fact. A fact may be detached, impersonal, cold and totally disassociated from life. Truth on the other hand, is warm, living and spiritual. A theological fact may be held in the mind for a lifetime without its having any positive effect upon the moral character; but truth is creative, saving, transforming, and it always changes the one who receives it into a humbler and holier man.

At what point, then, does a theological fact become for the one who holds it a life-giving truth? *At the point where obedience begins.* When faith gains the consent of the will to make an irrevocable committal to Christ as Lord, truth begins its saving, illuminating work; and not one moment before.

In His conflict with the religious textualists of His day our Lord often uttered short statements that serve as keys to unlock vast and precious storehouses of truth. In the Gospel according to John these may be found in something amounting to profusion. One such is found in John 7: "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (verse 17). A. T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, explains "he shall know" as being "experimental knowledge from willingness to do God's will." Then he quotes Westcott: "If there be no sympathy there can be no understanding."

Obviously these words of Christ were understood by the great British Biblical scholar Westcott and the brilliant American expositor Robertson as teaching that truth can be understood only by the mind that has surrendered to it. The average evangelical Bible teacher today finds such a radical interpretation too revolutionary to be comfortable and so just ignores it.

We must be willing to obey if we would know the true inner meaning of the teachings of Christ and the apostles. I believe this view prevailed in every revival that ever came to the church during her long history. Indeed a revived church may be distinguished from a dead one by the attitude of its members toward the truth. The dead church holds to the shell of truth without surrendering the will to it, while the church that wills to do God's will is immediately blessed with a visitation of spiritual powers.

Theological facts are like the altar of Elijah on Carmel before the fire came, correct, properly laid out, but altogether cold. When the heart makes the ultimate surrender, the fire falls and true facts are transmuted into spiritual truth that transforms, enlightens, sanctifies. The church or the individual that is Bible taught without being Spirit taught (and there are many of them) has simply failed to see that Truth lies deeper than the theological statement of it.

Truth cannot aid us until we become participators in it. We only possess what we experience. St. Gregory of Sinai, who lived in the fourteenth century, taught that understanding and participation were inseparable in the spiritual life. "He who seeks to understand commandments without fulfilling commandments, and to acquire such understanding through learning and reading, is like a man who takes a shadow for truth. For the understanding of truth is given to those who have become participants in truth (who have tasted it through living). Those who are not participants in truth and are not initiated therein, when they seek this understanding, draw it from a distorted wisdom. Of such men the apostle says 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit,' even though they boast of their knowledge of truth."

Here is a simple but neglected doctrine that should be restored to its rightful place in the thinking and teaching of the church. It would work wonders.

"EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE; HE IS A SHIELD TO THOSE WHO PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM. DO NOT ADD TO HIS WORDS, LEST HE REBUKE YOU, AND YOU BE FOUND A LIAR." (PROVERBS 30:5 & 6)