

## **Buy The Truth**

By: Keith Keyser

*“Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.”*  
Proverbs 23:23

Pontius Pilate’s cynical query “What is truth?” could be the motto of the modern age. The very concept of absolute truth is disbelieved, negated, or ignored by people of all walks of life. Once upon a time moral relativism was the unique worldview of ivory tower academics, overly speculative philosophers, and libertine authors and artists. From the avant-garde and the intellectual elites, however, this way of thinking has now trickled down to the masses – a phenomenon witnessed in countless contemporary songs and films, as well as in the shifting standards of public and private ethics. Against this devaluing of moral absolutes stands the eternal God of truth, who counsels us to “Buy the truth and do not sell it...” (Prov. 23:23.)

### **The Source Of Truth**

Deuteronomy 32:4 describes the Almighty in this manner: “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.” Isaiah also calls Him “the God of truth” (Is. 65:16.) Another psalm gives a similar description: “But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and **truth**” (Ps. 86:15.) Elsewhere He is addressed as the “Lord God of **truth**” (Ps. 31:5.) When God manifested Himself in flesh in the person of His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, He affirmed “I am the way, **the truth, & the life**. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6.) Put negatively, the Scripture says that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2.) Clearly these verses teach that truth is an aspect of the Divine nature. It is in keeping with who God is, what He says, and everything that He does. Moreover, apart from the Lord, man’s comprehension of the truth is skewed by his sin and incomplete as a result of human fallen-ness.

If people are to discover the truth, they must learn it from the God who is truth. Happily, He discloses Himself in His written Word, the Bible. His usage of the commercial metaphor of purchase for the acquisition of this knowledge demonstrates the seriousness of this pursuit. It is not an endeavor for the half-hearted or the dilettante. A seeker of the truth must be serious and willing to pay a price for gaining the truth.

### **Appraising Something Priceless**

Truth commands a high price: it demands a genuine reception of the living God and His Word at the expense of human thinking and personal preferences. Three quotations from a trio of classic expositors show that nothing is too dear to be given up for the joy of obtaining this greatest of all treasures. As Brooks points out: “Remember you can never over-buy it, whatsoever you give for it; you can never sufficiently sell it, if you should have all the world in exchange for it.”<sup>1</sup> The celebrated Prince of preachers agrees, saying:

...the text seems to tell us, that truth is the one pearl beneath the skies that is worth having, and whatever else we buy not, we must buy the truth, and whatever else we may have to sell, yet we must never sell the truth, but hold it fast as a treasure that will last us when gold has cankered, and silver has rusted, and the moth has eaten up all goodly garments, and when all the riches of men have gone like a puff of smoke, or melted in the heat of the judgment day like the dew in the beams of the morning sun...You may give all for it, but you may take nothing in exchange for it, since there is nothing that can be likened unto it.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, the eloquent words of Matthew Henry manifest the incomparable value of the truth:

When we choose rather to suffer loss in our temporal interest than to deny or neglect the truth then we buy it; and it is a pearl of such great price that we must be willing to part with all to purchase it, must make shipwreck of estate, trade, preferment, rather than of faith and a good conscience... We must not sell it. **Do not part with it for pleasures, honors, riches, any things in this world.** Do not neglect the study of it, nor throw off the profession of it, nor revolt from under the dominion of it, for the getting or saving of any secular interest whatsoever. *Hold fast the form of sound words*, and never let it go upon any terms.<sup>3</sup>

### **An Investment That Breaks The Bank**

Personal knowledge of Christ transfers one into His kingdom (Jn. 3:3, 5; Col. 1:12-13.) The Lord Jesus described this kingdom in terms that evoke images of tremendous resources being expended, comparing it to a treasure hidden in a field and a pearl of great price (Matt. 13:44-46.) To obtain the former, the purchaser sells all that he possesses to purchase it; to acquire the latter, he buys the entire field where the treasure is hidden. In both metaphors, no price is too great to gain the kingdom; this is how it is with all aspects of God's truth.

Paul understood this principle, asserting that "...what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8.) Reputation, religious attainments, and a carefully cultivated self-righteous façade were all cast aside in favor of "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus..." Indeed, in comparison with the personal knowledge of the Savior, Paul considered everything else in the world to be garbage, worthy of being discarded in order to gain the true treasure of the truth.

### **In Times Of Economic Uncertainty, Invest In The Truth**

Buying the truth requires a revaluation of everything in life: God must be viewed as supreme, and everything else seen as subsidiary. Personal convictions need to be formed

based on the Bible, not merely on one's own opinions. On the other hand, the truth should never be sold for self-gratification, private comfort, and public reputation. Ironside aptly summarizes the issue:

...he who desires the approval of God above the praise of men will value...[the truth] nevertheless, and be ready to purchase it at the cost of friends, reputation, possessions, yea, life itself. Nor will he part with it whatever the suffering that may result from contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Rationalists may sneer, and the superstitious persecute; but he who possesses the truth will find with it wisdom, instruction and understanding such as all the wise men after the flesh are strangers to.<sup>4</sup>

The believer's attitude must be: "God's Word is true; I will obey Him though it costs me everything in this world – even my life itself." One who buys God's truth as revealed in Christ discovers that it gains one entrance into an eternal and unshakeable kingdom (Heb. 12:28-29.) As Jim Elliot famously put it: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Brooks, "Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices," *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks, Volume 1*, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol; James Nisbet and Co.; G. Herbert, 1866), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> C.H. Spurgeon, "Buying the Truth," Sermon No. 3449, June 26th 1870, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* Vol. 61; Electronic edition: <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/3449.htm> Accessed on 6/26/12. Italics original.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, Pr 23:19–28 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), Electronic ed. (Logos.) Italics original.

<sup>4</sup> H. A. Ironside, *Notes on the Book of Proverbs*, (Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux Bros, 1908), pp. 324-325. Brackets mine.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Elliot, Journal entry October 28, 1949, *The Journals of Jim Elliot*. (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1978), p. 174. See here for background on the quote: <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/faq/20.htm>