

How Shall We Respond to the Truth?



What is Truth? (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Today I'm going to continue and complete the theme we've been studying this week: What Is Truth? We've looked successively at, what I called, the three coordinates of truth: first, Jesus; second, the Scripture; third, the Holy Spirit. And I've pointed out that we need to have all three in relationship, one with another. There are people today who are preaching a version of Jesus which is not scriptural—what Paul calls "another Jesus." So when we hear preaching about Jesus we need to check it with the Scripture.

And then there are people who quote a lot of Scripture, but their motives are not pure. They are motivated by lust or a desire to exploit people for financial gain or by personal ambition. And we find, that though they quote a lot of Scripture and maybe talk a lot about Jesus, the Holy Spirit doesn't rest upon it. The Holy Spirit in us doesn't respond to that type of presentation. So we have to have all three coordinates, relate to them all. And when we have those three together in agreement, then we know, "Here is the truth." We can trust it, we can lay hold of it, we can walk in it.

Let me just state those three coordinates again: Jesus; the Scripture; the Holy Spirit.

In my final talk on this theme today I'm going to deal with an issue of the utmost importance to every one of us: How Shall We Respond to the Truth? I want to say this, our response to the truth will determine our destiny. It's not a little question. It's a question of the most vital and, indeed, eternal importance for everyone of us—how will we respond to the truth when we're confronted with it? I want to say, we cannot afford to do what Pilate did. Do you remember what Pilate did? He asked, "What is truth?" And then he sent for a basin of water and washed his hands and said, "This is not my responsibility. It's somebody elses responsibility." But he didn't get away with that. He was not exonerated by merely washing his hands in public. We cannot compromise. We have to respond one way or the other. There's no neutrality left when we're really confronted with the truth.

So in this talk today I'm going to share with you another solemn warning against deception which is found in the New

Testament. This is found in the writings of Paul, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 7–12. This is what Paul says and you'll see it's a very solemn, serious warning against deception. He says this:

> "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness." (NIV)

Those are solemn words. I want to point out certain important conclusions that emerge. First of all, Satan can produce counterfeit miracles. "The coming of the lawless one," Paul says, "will be accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles…" The mere fact that we are confronted by miracles, by the supernatural, does not guarantee that we're confronted by the truth. We have to have the three coordinates that I've spoken about.

Second, and very, very important and basic, Satan's deceptions do not restrain lawlessness. He's the lawless one. He performs counterfeit miracles, but they're out of lawlessness. They're not out of righteousness and holiness. So when we're confronted with something that may be supernatural, that may be a very powerful sounding presentation, we have to ask ourselves, "What does it do in me? Does it restrain lawlessness? Does it bring my life into submission to the requirements of God, the requirements of righteousness and holiness? Does it make me a better servant of the Lord, a better servant of my fellow human beings? Is it producing in me love for God and love for my fellow man which are the real objectives of the true Christian faith?" If not, even though there's much that's miraculous, it's the evidences that it's not really the work of God or the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of holiness. Wherever He's at work and allowed to have His way, the result will be increasing holiness in our lives—not lawlessness. So bear that in mind. One of the ways we can test things is how do they affect the kind of way we live? Are they making us more righteous, and more holy?

Then notice what Paul says about these people who accept this deception, "…They perish because they refused to love the truth." You see, ultimately it's a decision of the will. "They refused…" They wouldn't do it. So it's not just a question of intellectual abstract reasoning, it's a question of the application of our will—how do we respond to the truth? And I say again, and I cannot emphasize it too often, there is no neutrality. If we're going to respond positively, we must love the truth. We must not merely tolerate it or accept it or try to compromise with it, we have to love it. These people of whom Paul warns us, perished because they refused to love the truth.

Then the fourth point, rejecting truth subjects us to powerful delusion. It says, "…for this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so they will believe the lie." What was the reason? The reason was that they refused to love the truth. Refusing to love the truth exposed them to deception. And that's really one of the most amazing statements in the Scripture for me. "God will send them powerful delusion." Did you realize that? You see, God will not tolerate our playing around with the truth. If God sees that we're sincere and willing to commit ourselves to the truth, He'll be very patient and very gracious. But if God sees that we've been confronted clearly with the truth, we've seen the real issues and we're not will to make a commitment to the truth and love it, then one of God's most severe judgments on such people is to send them a powerful delusion. That's a judgment of God! But it's a judgment of God upon those who refuse to love the truth.

And then the fifth point in commenting on these words of Paul. The real motive for which people reject the truth is that they delight in wickedness. It says, "All will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness." You see, behind all the intellectual smoke screen that people raise about the truth and their intellectual difficulties, the real motivation is they know that God's truth will stop them committing sin, and will cause them to lead godly and holy and pure lives. And they don't want to do that. So they reject the truth because of it's implications in the way that they will have to live.

Let me just restate those five points out of Paul there:

1. Satan can produce counterfeit miracles.

2. Satan's deceptions do not restrain lawlessness, they do not change our character.

3. These people perish because they refuse to love the truth. There is no neutrality.

4. Rejecting truth subjects us to powerful delusion.

5. The real motive for rejecting is that people delight in wickedness.

Now let's look at the alternative—the positive. In the next verse, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 13. This is what Paul says:

> "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit [Holy Spirit] and through belief in the truth." (NIV)

Let me emphasize those last two phrases—"...through the sanctifing work of the Holy Spirit and through belief in the truth."

Let me point out four truths that emerge from that verse there. First of all, everything issues out of God's choice. "We thank God for you brothers because from the beginning God chose you." Second, in the outworking of God's choice, it's the Holy Spirit who draws us, who sets us apart, it's the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that draws us to the place where we're confronted with truth in the person of Jesus. Third, it's through the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to believe the truth which is revealed in Jesus. We depend on the Holy Spirit for the grace to believe. And the result of believing the truth, fourthly, we are saved.

Let me just recapitulate that. Everything issues out of God's choice. In the outworking of God's choice, the Holy Spirit draws us. Third, through the Holy Spirit we are enabled to believe the truth revealed in Jesus. And fourth, the result is we are saved. Thank God we are saved through the truth.

Just let me state in closing, those three coordinates of truth which have been the theme of my talks this week. First, Jesus; second, the Scripture; third, the Holy Spirit. When these three are in agreement and in harmony then we know we have the truth. We can live by it, we can be confident and secure.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be sharing with you another rich and wonderful theme of Scripture.

My special offer this week is directly related to my theme. It's my book Eternal Judgment. Does that title sound grim and foreboding? It need not! God's judgment is based on truth. If we will face up to God's truth in this life, then we will have no need to fear God's judgment in eternity. My book will help you to do this.

Also, my complete series of talks this week on What Is Truth? is available in a single, carefully edited cassette.

Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

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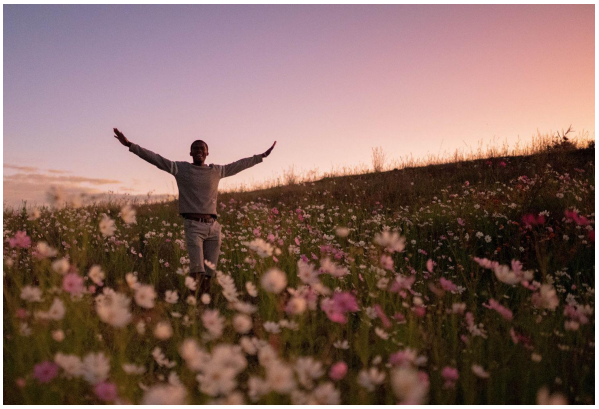

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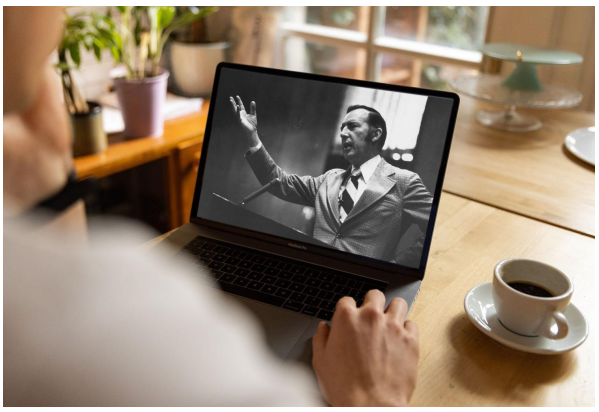

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