

SERMON #2 TRUTH

Reflecting the Heart of Christ

BE TRANSFORMED

JOHN R. MURPHY

Subject: Resembling Christ's Character Through Truth

Scripture references:

Romans 8:29 AMP

"For those whom He Foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness],..."

John 14:30 AMP

"I will not talk with you much more, for the prince (evil genius, ruler) of the world is coming. And he has no claim on Me. [He has nothing in common with Me; there is nothing in Me that belongs to him, and he has no power over Me.]"

John 8:44 AMP

He (Satan) was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a falsehood, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar [himself] and the father of lies and of all that is false."

For today, let's focus on three key truths from these three scriptures and conclusions we make from them.

First, God desires you to inwardly reflect- in your character- the character of Christ. For your blessing and His glory.

Second, there is nothing in Jesus that remotely reflects the character of Satan, which is why Satan had no control over Him.

And third, a foundational characteristic of Satan is that he is the father of all lies, which he uses to advance his murderous intent.

So- What conclusions can we draw from these truths and how do we respond? I believe that the obvious conclusion is that we want to rid ourselves of any lies we believe. That would be consistent with God's desire to make us like Christ, and it would remove the associated torment and influence of Satan in our lives. Our response then would be to reject the lies we believe and replace them with God's Truth.

So let's dig a little deeper into the implications of how lies affect us and the consequences of unknowingly embracing lies as truth.

It is important to understand that lies cannot be separated from the plans and purposes of Satan, who is described in the John 8 passage as the father of all that is false. Why would Satan seek to have us believe lies? Jesus would say that the motivation for luring us into believing lies is to advance Satan's purposes. Simply put, Satan advances his purposes with lies, while Jesus advances the will of the Father with truth.

SERMON #2

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When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert, He knew that if He believed the perverted truth offered up by Satan that His life as well as ours would be lost from God forever. If He had given in to the temptations, it would have separated Him from His Father for eternity and disqualified Him as our Savior.

Jesus reported to the disciples in John 14:30 that there was nothing of Satan in Him and therefore Satan had no power over Him. Satan could not control Jesus, because he had no access to apply a manipulating, controlling force. Jesus could not be tempted by Satan in a way that would cause Him to sin, give up His relationship with God and walk away from His anointing as the author of our salvation (Hebrew 5). One of the reasons Jesus could resist Satan at this moment of truth was that Satan was never successful in fathering or birthing a lie that Jesus believed.

Temptation is the common struggle of all mankind, but the degree to which we give in to sin is what causes a problem for us. That is when the consequences of our decision to sin bring us suffering and dishonor God.

How important is it to God that we resist sin? Would you take it as a blessing if you could have more success resisting your sin nature? Wouldn't it actually be a huge blessing if we could resist sin with increased success that requires less and less effort? I am not proposing that it was effortless for Jesus to lead a sinless life, but I do think it was easier for Him than it is for us. Let's look again at why that was the case.

Back to the John 14:30 passage. There was nothing of Satan in Jesus. Jesus believed no lies. Isn't it fairly easy to conclude that if we did not believe any lies, then Satan would have less ability to control us, to tempt us and to cause us to sin and suffer? A lie must be believed to advance the murderous intent of Satan. Once a lie is believed, it resides in the heart of the believer with the intent to kill, steal and destroy their life. Any lie is a direct assault on the abundant inner life that scripture promises believers.

The Word says that the Truth shall set you free. If so, then a lie is an implement of bondage. Being in bondage is being in the control of another. Ever known someone who was compelled to act in a certain way because of what they believed? For example, someone who stopped trying to accomplish a goal because they believed they were a failure. Or a person who repeatedly gets involved in hurtful, damaging relationships because they believe they must endure that in order to have a relationship. Perhaps you know someone who is emotionally distraught because they don't believe anyone could love them. In each case, the suffering begins with a lie.

If we believe any lie, then we have something of Satan in us that is diabolically disguised as truth. Christ had Himself as a standard to discern the truth of all things. While we do not yet manifest the perfection of Christ, scripture assures us that He indeed lives in us through the Holy Spirit. (Gal 2:20, John 14:17). We can rely on the Holy Spirit to expose the lies of the enemy and strengthen us to reject anything false that opposes the truth of God.

Do you think you might believe something that is actually a lie? I am guessing the answer is somewhere between 'probably' to 'most likely'. If you are struggling today to determine what lie you may believe, there is a reason for that. The only way to know you are believing a lie is to consider it in the light of truth.

SERMON #2

TRUTH

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Digging for truth is absolutely worth the effort. Think for a moment about what is at stake here. So many situations and outcomes in our lives depend on what we believe to be true. On a foundational level, our quality of life and the peace we live in is based on what we believe. There are vitally important beliefs that reside in us, directing the path and mandating the quality of our lives. A very important belief would be our sense of self-worth.

I speak regularly with people who struggle with very low self-esteem. Going through life with this burden has caused them much suffering from bad decisions and a general defeatist life perspective. Stemming sometimes from a series of negative life events or possibly one profoundly traumatic experience, these people have come to believe that they are virtually worthless. There can be many reasons why a person might have this life perspective. Some on the list are:

The impact of having a father or mother who was not emotionally equipped or physically present to express the love the child needed. Someone who has not received the love of a parent can come to believe that there is something fundamentally wrong with them and perhaps they are not good enough to be loved by another. From this belief, one can easily leap to the second conclusion that they do not have the basic worth that others have.

Someone else may have accepted as true the negative, judgmental, or devaluing statements made to them by others. Examples would be statements ranging from 'you are a failure' to 'God is punishing you because of how bad you are'. Some have wrongly concluded that based on how their life has gone, God must not love them and that He has turned His back on them for good.

Another common belief is, 'I have to earn God's love' or that 'I have to work really hard at being good if God is going to let someone like me into the kingdom'.

Having any of these beliefs is a tormenting, joy-robbing aspect of who we are that has a very real impact on our quality of life.

Someone who believes they're unworthy of another's love lives under a sense of low self-worth that will affect every relationship and interaction with people for the rest of their lives. It will affect the type of people they call friends, the type of person they might marry and it might even cause them to take irrational physical actions. I have known many whose entire tragic life course resulted from believing lies. An obvious extreme example is the person who chooses to take their own life. Do they come to this place because they are full of the truth of who God is and how much He loves them? No! They have believed a series of lies that has brought them to a point of believing the last fatal lie that the permanent solution of death is the answer to the way they feel about their life at that moment.

So you can see how Satan works. Through his lies, he can indeed kill, steal and destroy a life. He delivers suffering with every lie and then gets us to believe that his answers for the pain are the best we can do for solutions. Self-destruction is not the pattern of people who are at peace; it is a path chosen by those who are tormented inside. And that torment is likely to include lies. As Christians, we are not immune to believing lies. Lies are common to all mankind. With each lie that resides in us, Satan has something of his in us. Unlike the proclamation of Jesus in John

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14:30, Satan has something in common with us, and it affords him the ability to influence us.

What we want for ourselves is what God wants for us. He wants us to inwardly reflect who His Son is, because Jesus' character is one that has no tolerance for lies.

Just to be clear at this point, we are not focused here on the specific sin of telling lies.

It is certainly true that speaking truth and not telling lies is consistent with the behavior of Christ. But we are seeking to reflect the character of Christ on a deeper level by not believing lies and therefore having no lies or false beliefs within us. Back to the John 14:30 passage. Satan could not find anything in Jesus that they had in common. Nothing of Satan was in Jesus, and he therefore had no control of him. So the Devil could not make Him do it! The Truth of Christ is immune to the will of Satan. God wants us to be increasingly immune to the influences of Satan.

What a blessing to have less and less of the stuff of this world and the temptations and influences of Satan in us. God knows what an amazing blessing it would be, and that is why He wants us to be like His Son. Christ came so that you and I would live life abundantly. How much more abundant and full and joyful we would be if we allowed the Truth of Christ to weed out the lies in our heart.

It is time to drive your stake in the ground regarding what is true, and it must begin with the truth of who God says He is. If you are a believer then at some point you have declared the truth of who He is, who Jesus is and the truth of the price they both paid, the sacrifice that they both endured for us. And that truth is to be followed with the truth of who God says we are. Despite the false beliefs that may have crept into our hearts and we have gone through life accepting as true, it is a lie that is meant to torment if it does not align with what God says.

Man can only choose to accept or reject the truth. He cannot create truth. So practically speaking in life, if you really believe the truth of how much God loves you, then you can know that your value has been established and that anyone who does not agree with that must take that up with God. It is not for you to defend. Brothers and sisters, one of the most important life truths is that our value has been established by the God of the universe through His perfect love for us.

God has known us, loved us, fought for us, sacrificed for us and paid for us, so that He can spend eternity with us. What could be a greater statement of our value? You know how you feel loved and valued when someone makes the effort to be with you. We cannot separate God's love for us from how much He values us. The Truth of how greatly you are valued is inextricably intertwined with how much you are loved. Our God loves us, so your value is absolute, eternal and unassailable.

We are here today to declare that the lies of the world must bow to the truth of God. We are going to take on those lies by rejecting them and accepting the truth of who we are and ask God to give us the strength to live in the reality of that truth. We will forgive all those who have spoken lies into our hearts and ask God to forgive them and heal their hearts from the lies that prompted them.

SERMON #2 TRUTH

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There is a huge benefit to be realized when we secure our worth in the truth of God. When Christians are foundationally secure in their value through the reality of God's love and value, then when others are difficult or even purposefully unkind, we experience it very differently and are ultimately able to have grace for them. But if you are depending on their approval or opinion for value, then your well-being is at risk. This leaves the quality of your life up for grabs to the last encounter with a world that typically chooses to reflect something other than God's love. You are depending on people to provide a foundation for your life that only God is trustworthy to establish.

God has put a stake in the ground, which is the sword of Truth that establishes our vital sense of wholeness and well-being. It is time to grab that sword and wield it to receive the rich blessing God has intended for us.

I am going to pray for us now and ask God to show each of us individually what lie we have believed that contradicts how much God loves and values us. And if there is a person you need to forgive for communicating that lie, pray that He would bring that person to your mind. Then I will lead us all in prayer to reject that lie and offer forgiveness.

Let's pray;

Heavenly Father, thank You for the truth of Your love and that I can be assured of my worth through Your perfect and eternal love for me. Please reveal to me the lie I have believed that opposes Your truth and show me if there is anyone that I need to forgive.

(Pause for reflection and conviction)

Brothers and sisters, please pray with me. You can pray out loud, you can whisper or pray in your thoughts.

Heavenly Father, I reject the lie that my worth can be established by anything other than You. I specifically reject the lie that _____. I accept the Truth that You love me and value me perfectly. I declare Your truth that You value me immensely and desire to have me with You in Your kingdom for eternity. I reject all the lies I have believed about my worth from how people have treated me or what they have spoken over me or any other lie that opposes the truth of how much You love and value me. I also forgive them and ask You to forgive them as well. Father I ask You to heal these people of the lies they suffer under so that they could free of their suffering and prosper.

Father forgive me for believing a lie that opposes Your truth. I desire to live my life under Your truth and ask for the strength to resist any belief that opposes Your truth. Father I desire to always be sensitive to Your leading to know when I have believed a lie, and I ask for Your help to reject it and live by Your truth to Your glory. Father please remove from me the access Satan has had to torment me and control me through lies. I ask this in the name of Your Son Jesus. Amen.