

Buy the Truth and Sell It Not

Proverbs 23:23; Matthew 13:46

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As essential as faith is in your coming to Jesus Christ and as love is in your living for Christ, you could neither come to Christ in faith nor show forth your faith in love if the one true living God had not revealed His truth to you in Scripture. You cannot believe in a Christ who has not been revealed to you in Scripture (Romans 10:17); nor can you love a God who has not made Himself known to you in His Word (1 John 5:3).

If the God of the Bible has opened your eyes, given you faith, and caused you to love Him and His truth, you are most blessed among mankind. For the vast majority of people in the world are blinded to the truth by their own pride and corruption. They have deceived themselves into believing a lie. They are on the road to eternal destruction. But you, who were likewise filled with the same pride and corruption like the rest, were captured by the grace of God and given sight to see the truth of God, given faith to receive the truth of God, and given love to cherish the truth of God. Have you bowed before the Lord God today to pour out your heart in thanksgiving to the God who cannot lie for His infinite mercy and grace in revealing to you His infallible truth?

Dear ones, without the truth you know nothing. You are in darkness and confusion. You will deceive yourself. All is hopelessness and destruction. But in receiving the truth there is certainty of knowledge. You walk in the light and have understanding. You have meaning and purpose in life. There is a certain hope for the future. And the way of life is set before you.

This Lord's Day, the God of truth would remind you again of the precious truth which has been revealed and offered to you so that you do not grow weary in hearing it, nor become dull in believing it, nor allow it to become a burden to you in obeying it.

The two main points from our text in Proverbs 23:23 are these: (1) We Must Seek Always to Buy the Truth; (2) We Must Seek Never to Sell the Truth.

I. We Must Seek Always to Buy the Truth.

A. Solomon speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit states: "Buy the truth." Let us make a few observations about the word "buy."

1. This is a command.

a. This is not an option for the Christian (nor for anyone else for that matter). God does not suggest that it would be nice if you once in a while sought to buy the truth. He does not tell you, "Try it, you might like it." The Hebrew word for "buy" is a command wherein you are required by God to search for the truth and when you have found it, to purchase it regardless of the cost to you or to your loved ones.

b. Dear ones, this is a moral commandment that is required of all people, in all ages, and at all times. In fact, your duty to "buy the truth" is found in the Third Commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). To hear or to see the truth of God and yet to ignore it, neglect it, or oppose it is to take the name of the Lord in vain. For God's name is in His truth. The *Larger Catechism* (Question 113) lists as one of the sins forbidden in the Third Commandment, the "opposing of God's truth, grace, and ways."

c. Let us be clear that there is no neutrality when it comes to the truth of Jesus Christ. Even when we sincerely embrace what we think is true (though in fact, it is false), we have still sinned against God (Proverbs 14:12). Ignorance of God's truth does not excuse anyone from sin. Willful disobedience is indeed an aggravation of your sin, but fall not into the Arminian error of thinking that because you are

ignorant, you have not sinned or violated God's law. The Arminian definition of sin is this: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). There is no question that to act contrary to what you know to be true is sin. Who would disagree with that? But the Bible goes much farther than willful disobedience in defining what sin is. The Bible defines sin as transgression of the Law of God (1 John 3:4), and it doesn't limit sin to your actions, but includes your desires and words as well. So whether you know you are transgressing the Law of God or not is not what determines whether you have actually sinned (remember there were offerings for sins of ignorance required by God in the Old Testament). Dear ones, play not loose and free with the truth of God, thinking there is little consequence to the decisions you make for or against it (as if to say, "Oh, this is not essential to my salvation so it doesn't really matter what I believe on this point"). Although none of us perfectly embraces every truth revealed by God (we all fall short to varying degrees in standing for and in receiving the truth of God), let us never minimize the truth of God at any point. For we are commanded by God, "Buy the truth" (and as we shall soon see, we are to buy it at all costs).

2. Note also that "buy" the truth is a marketing term.

a. The image painted by the word "buy" envisions us going forth to the store and having to sort through many products and commodities that pass for the truth. But we are to reject that which is false and rather to buy that which is true. We are told in Scripture that there are many counterfeits vying for that which is true so you must be ever so careful that you do not purchase a lie. This is even more true now than ever before because of the instant access we have to many different theological views by way of the internet. You can be immediately in a cyber market of theological ideas as you watch and read a debate over national covenanting, or purity in worship, or justification by faith alone.

b. You must go into such debates on the internet or such forums of discussion with one another not merely to satisfy your curiosity, not merely to fill your minds with theological terms, not to impress others with your knowledge, nor to throw out a few more ideas into the theological pot just to see how people react to what you say, but rather you should enter such situations with the purpose of buying the truth and sorting it out from all error. What are your motives in debating theological issues? Is it a love to buy the truth whatever it may cost you, or is it a love to win an argument and to display how much you know? Do your discussions concerning the truth end in fruitless outbursts of anger or offense being given to others due to your arrogance? When others do not receive what you say, is it your pride that is hurt or do you sincerely grieve because the truth of Christ has been rejected?

c. Dear ones, continue your theological discussions with an intense love of the truth of God's infallible Word in the areas of the regulative principle of worship, justification by faith alone, eschatology, ethics, and any other subject, but examine your motives that you desire to buy the truth at all costs rather than to flaunt your own abilities.

3. How do you "buy" the truth? Is the truth literally for sale?

a. In one sense the truth is not for sale, for the Lord Jesus told his disciples as they were to go out into the highways and byways of life, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). If the truth of God could only be purchased with money, the rich would have it and the poor would be excluded from it (James 2:5). In fact, in this sense the truth is not for sale. You are invited to come to Christ (who Himself is the truth) without money and without price if you hunger and thirst to have the gospel of salvation (Isaiah 55:1). In this sense, the gospel was bought and paid for by the Lord Jesus Christ at the price of His suffering the temporal and eternal punishment of a holy God against the sins and errors of His elect. As a result, the gospel of truth is freely offered to you today without your payment or works in the least. By faith alone receiving the free gift of eternal life through Christ and the gift of righteousness and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, you may buy the truth of Christ today (right now) without price. If you try to pay for the truth of Christ by offering to God your good works, your merit, your gifts, or your graces (even your faith or repentance) in exchange for the gospel, you will not buy the truth, but will instead buy a lie (a false gospel) which will lead you to everlasting damnation.

b. But in another sense, the truth of God (according to Proverbs 23:23) is for sale for you are to BUY it. The truth revealed to you by the Lord must be bought with a willingness to suffer the loss of your job, your house, your family, your friends, your freedom, your reputation, and yes even your own life. For there is nothing in this world, which is passing away, that is more valuable than Jesus Christ and His truth. The truth of Christ is eternal and is the means by which God saves you from the wrath to come, by which you enjoy fellowship and communion with Christ, by which you grow into the image of Christ, by which you avoid sin and temptation, and by which you lead others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Dear ones, what are you willing to forsake in order to buy the truth? Just how valuable to you is the truth of your Savior? Is it valuable as long as you are with your brothers and sisters in Christ, but it seems to lose its value when you are all alone or when you are with worldlings? Would you be willing to give up your own life to buy or to stand for the truth of God as did those in England who would not confess that the bread and wine in the Lord Supper become the actual body and blood of Christ and as a result went to the stake to be burned for that truth during the reign of Bloody Mary? Or what about the Covenanters that went to the scaffold to be hung because they would not confess that the civil magistrate has authority over the doctrine, worship, and government of the Church, but rather that Christ alone, who is the King of the Church, has such authority over the Church? The Scriptures tell us there is coming a time in the future when those who would be faithful to Christ must buy the truth at the cost of their own lives (Revelation 12:11). It is time to take inventory of the value you place upon Christ and His truth. Christians neither receive nor apply the truth of God perfectly in their lives (it is true), but Christians do DESIRE to receive and apply the truth of God as faithfully as they can in their lives (even if those desires are weak at times in their lives).

4. Having considered then that this buying is a moral command from God that cannot be altered, that it is a marketing term, and in what sense we are to buy the truth, let us consider fourthly that this buying of the truth can only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

a. It is the Holy Spirit that must open your eyes to the infinite value of God's truth. You will never see nor appreciate the priceless treasure and the riches of Christ's truth apart from the work of God's Spirit in your heart (1 Corinthians 2:14). This is the reason why in the very same family there may be a Jacob (with all his weaknesses) who loves the birthright of truth and an Esau who despises the birthright of truth and who is willing to sell it for his own comforts, even if it is to his own destruction. This is the reason why in the very same church there may be a Peter (with all his frailties) who loves the gospel of Christ and a Judas who pretends to love the gospel of Christ and is willing to betray it for 30 pieces of silver. It is the Spirit of God that reveals the truth of God, for He is called the Spirit of truth (John 16:13; Ephesians 1:16-18). Dear ones, in buying the truth of God you are not wise enough to do so without the illumination of God's Holy Spirit. That is not to say that you must forsake reason and intelligence in buying the truth. It is simply to say that you cannot lean upon your own unaided reason or wisdom to lead you to the truth of God to buy it. The Spirit of God uses your mind to lead you and guide you in distinguishing truth from error and in applying the truth to every area of your life. How much time do you spend in prayer simply beseeching God by His Spirit to illuminate your mind to understand and apply the truth of God? Dear ones, never forget that it is the Spirit of God that opens your eyes to the truth, gives you faith to embrace the truth, bestows upon you love to cherish the truth, and grants you an earnest desire and willingness to obey the truth. It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.

5. Lastly, under this first main point, let us briefly consider what it is that you are to buy: "Buy THE TRUTH." Not an imitation of the truth; not something that closely resembles the truth; but buy the truth of God itself.

a. What makes the truth true?

(1) THE ESSENTIAL ONENESS OF GOD makes the truth true. God is one living, eternal, infinite God. Although there are three persons within the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), they are not each 1/3 part of God, but each is fully God having the same essential nature. Now since God is

essentially one, there cannot be contradictory or conflicting views of the truth. For just as there is one God in essence and being, so there is one divine truth revealed by that one God. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have never disagreed with one another as to what is true or what is false, what is right or what is wrong. Why? They are eternally one God in essence, rather than being many gods.

(2) THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD makes the truth true. This one true living God as revealed in Scripture is not deficient in knowledge at any point, but is omniscient knowing all things actual and all things possible and knowing all this at the same time. This one true living God has never learned anything nor has He ever forgotten anything. All knowledge is immediately present with God from eternity to eternity.

(3) THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD makes the truth true. Truth is true because it reflects the holy character of a righteous God who is absolutely true and faithful to Himself and to His Word. He cannot lie. Thus, a proper study of truth in whatever realm will ultimately lead one back to the God of truth; for all that is actually true is true because it is God's truth.

(4) THE AUTHORITY OF GOD makes the truth true. God is the Creator and Lord of all creation. He rules and orders all that comes to pass for His own glory. God has never consulted man nor angel in determining what is true or false, what is right or what is wrong. No one has ever been God's counselor or teacher. He has sovereignly revealed His holy will to us His creatures. Only he has the sovereign right, therefore, to declare what is true.

(5) THE REVELATION OF GOD IN CREATION AND IN SCRIPTURE makes the truth true. The fact that such a God as just described would determine to reveal Himself and His truth to human beings must require that His revelation be absolutely true and without error. Yes, the sin of man may pervert the revelation of God in understanding it, but the revelation of God has been made known in creation and in Scripture. Being absolutely sovereign and absolutely powerful, He is able to use even sinful men to record perfectly, word for word, His truth. And this He has done in Holy Scripture in order to give to man a revelation of truth concerning the glories of His salvation in rescuing elect sinners (like you and me) through the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth of God is most fully and clearly revealed in the Bible. It is God's self-revelation. And what is chiefly revealed in Scripture is the will of God for our salvation. It is God's autobiography as to how He graciously determined to glorify Himself by loving and saving undeserving sinners through His own appointed mediator: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Bible is God's love letter to perishing sinners He has chosen to rescue—lost sinners He has determined to find—ungodly sinners He has purposed to forgive through the blessed work of Jesus Christ. Only in the Bible do we find the infallible rule of faith and life. In the Bible God fully reveals to man what man's chief end is: To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. To turn from this revelation of truth is to consign oneself to eternal death. But to embrace by faith this revelation of truth and the gospel it proclaims is to receive the God and Savior revealed therein and all the benefits of everlasting life.

II. We Must Seek Never to Sell the Truth.

A. There is always the temptation to sell the truth: to sell the truth by ignoring it because it is uncomfortable, to sell the truth by neglecting it because you are too busy to obey it, to sell the truth by compromising it in order to receive the applause of men, to sell the truth by rejecting it because you simply do not want to believe it. You also sell the truth when like Peter you say you believe it, but do not practice it. Peter believed that it was faith in Jesus Christ that could alone save guilty sinners. However, when Peter would not eat with the Gentiles there in Antioch, he in effect said by his practice that faith in Jesus Christ was not enough—one must also follow the ceremonial law in order to come to Christ. Dear ones, our double standards in saying one thing and doing something altogether different are a form of selling the truth. We are all guilty of this to varying degrees, but unless we are aware of the serious nature of what we do, we will not grieve over

it, confess it as sin, seek the forgiveness of our Savior, and endeavor (by God's grace) to be more consistent in our words and in our deeds.

B. Dear ones, does your view of the truth of Christ lend itself to buying it at the cost of everything you have and not selling it whatever the cost to you, or rather does your view of the truth of Christ more lend itself to an attitude in which you can take it or leave it? Is the truth of God valuable to you only when it is comfortable and does not bring too many hardships into your life, or is it valuable to you even to the point of ridicule, isolation from family and friends, persecution, imprisonment, and death? Is your view of the truth reflected in the words of Christ as found in the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price in Matthew 13:46 ("he sold all that he had")? Is the truth of God esteemed more by you than your necessary food (Job 23:12)? Do you take the truth of God with you when you listen to your music, or is it very convenient simply to forget about the truth that God has revealed to you in His Word because you enjoy the music or the beat so much? Do you take the truth of God with you when you sit before your computers or watch your movies in making a covenant with your eyes and ears not to allow that which is unclean and profane to entertain you? At what cost are you willing to buy the truth? At the cost of your pleasure? At the cost of your desires? At the cost of your comforts? At the cost of your pride?

Dear ones, buy the truth and sell it not. Seek the truth as one seeks for gold. Adorn yourself in the truth as one wearing fine clothing. Be not ashamed of the truth for there is nothing of greater value in this world than the truth of God. Come to Jesus Christ today and freely receive Him who said of Himself, "I am the way, THE TRUTH, and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). You do not need a college degree to receive Christ in whom is all knowledge and wisdom. You must turn from your own righteousness and embrace Him as your righteousness. You must turn from your own wisdom and cling to Him as your wisdom. You must forsake your own knowledge of the truth and receive Christ and His knowledge of the truth. Buy the truth today, and sell it not.

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