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The Demands of Truth

When one is exposed to the truth that is God's word (John 17.17), what does it demand? Is there a divine expectation? Does the New Testament record for us any response to the proclamation of truth that clearly meets with God's approval?

Having been largely rejected in Thessalonica for their preaching of the Gospel, Paul and Silas fled that city for their own safety and came to Berea proclaiming the same message of salvation in Jesus Christ (Acts 17.1-10). On that occasion, an entirely different response was elicited by the presentation of God's truth. *"Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men"* (Acts 17.11-12).

The inspired record informs us of the commendable character these Bereans demonstrated when they heard the Gospel. Clearly their reaction to the preaching of Paul and Silas met with God's pleasure. What warranted such high praise? What can we learn from them about the appropriate response to truth?

Truth demands our ATTENTION. The Bereans "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17.11). This audience seized upon the opportunity to hear God's word, demonstrating both the inclination and the zeal to pursue its depths (1 Corinthians 2.10). Their sincere interest was to know truth, and that hunger manifested itself in their focus and study (cf. 2 Timothy 2.15). Truth demands the same of us, for it is

the well-spring of spiritual liberty (John 8.32) for all who seek salvation (Romans 1.16). But this attention alone is insufficient.

Truth also demands our ACCEPTANCE. Having carefully searched the inspired Scriptures for confirmation of the message presented to them, and having verified the truth of the Gospel proclaimed by Paul and Silas, “Therefore many of them believed” (Acts 17.12). Such is the only natural response to truth from any honest heart, for “without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (Hebrews 11.6). The salvation of one’s soul demands that he “in humility receive the word implanted” (James 1.21). In other words, truth demands a place within us, woven into the very fiber of our being and grafted into our hearts, that our lives might be shaped by God’s will. But, “Can that faith save him?” (James 2.14)

Truth ultimately demands our ACTION. Having exhorted his audience to meekly receive the truth, James continued by saying, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves... An effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (James 1.22,25). To fully believe the truth (Acts 17.12) is to implement what it demands for our lives (cf. Acts 16.30-34). Attention to and acceptance of truth without its application is much akin to receiving a physician’s diagnosis without taking the prescribed treatment. “Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself... You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone... For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead” (James 2.14-26). One absolutely cannot be of noble character while refusing submission to the truth of God (cf. Matthew 7.21). Jesus simply asked, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6.46)

Divine wisdom enjoins, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it” (Proverbs 23.23). The unsurpassed value of truth demands our attention, acceptance, and action. Any less is to choose the bondage of ignorance, to embrace the travesty of falsehood, and to live under the condemnation of error. Noble-mindedness, like that demonstrated by those ancient Bereans, is the only acceptable response to the truth of God’s word.