

Rom. 14:19
So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

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SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

by Jim Stauffer

When the apostle Paul explains the process of educating brethren in order to strengthen their faith, he introduces God's plan of installing offices (people for duties) in the church. He speaks of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers as being those whose job it is to teach and nurture the children of God. He says this is so we can all become mature and not be easily deceived as children (the immature) would be by false doctrine. He follows that saying, *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, (Eph. 4:15).*

What he says is there are three things the child of God must do as he grows toward maturity in his faith. First it is to **speak**. We are to be proud of who we are. We are the children of God as a result of His love (**1 John 3:1**). We are to be contenders for and defenders of the faith (**Jude 3**). Therefore, we profess our faith courageously in the face of whatever persecution or intimidation we face in whatever generation in which we live (**1 Pet. 3:15**).

The second thing he says is we must speak the **truth**. Both God and Christ are innately righteous which means simply they are always just and true in the things they say and do. We represent Christ when we speak, therefore we must speak the truth. Jesus said God's word is the truth (**John 17:17**) and that He was the standard of truth for all men to hear and follow (**John 18:37**) It is clear then, for us to speak the truth, we must speak as God has spoken and He speaks to us through His word (**1 Pet. 4:11cf. Acts 16:32**).

However, speaking the truth in every place we find ourselves only happens when it is done in love. Any other motivation will falter from time to time. We are disciples of Christ Who came to earth to do the will of Him Who sent Him (**John 5:30**). Jesus came to earth because of the will of Him Who sent Him. Listen to the explanation of Christ the grace of God coming as a

demonstration of His mercy, because he loved His creation. *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)," (Eph. 2:4-5).*

Brethren, we can only serve Him if we truly believe Him and His message and by doing so learn to love all that He loves. To truly be His disciples we must allow Him to dwell in us (**Gal. 2:20 cf. John 6:54-57**). We then learn to love that which He loves, His creation, those for whom He died and we will then have the motivation to speak the truth to them because we love them as He does.

Being Better Than the Pharisees

John Pollard

In **Matthew 5:20**, Jesus said, *"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."* Ponder with me for a second. How do you think the Jews felt about that statement? Maybe some would expect their response to be something along the lines of, "We completely understand where you are coming from Jesus and we'll do it." But that would probably be extremely hopeful at best.

The truth is, they were probably stunned by those words. To the Jews, the Scribes and the Pharisees were the best in terms of keeping the law and doing what it says. They had the law, the scrolls and they were the teachers of the law. How could they (and we) possibly be more righteous than themselves? And so their response would have likely been something along the lines of, "There is just no way! This is such a high

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standard. Very difficult, impossible even!" But the problem the Jews had was their misconception of their religious leaders. They were in fact not really spiritual pillars and leaders at all.

The Pharisees, especially so, had a righteousness that consisted in outward observances of the ceremonial and traditional law. They offered sacrifices, fasted often, prayed much, were very punctual and rigorous about tithes and the ceremonies of religion, but they neglected justice, truth, purity, and holiness of heart (**cf. Matthew 23:1-33**). Their righteousness, to put it bluntly, was fake. It was truly counterfeit. Jesus spoke concerning their habit of always saying but never doing what they said (**Matthew 23:1-4**). Every opportunity that they got, they sought to glorify themselves among men (**Matthew 6:1-5; 23:5-15, 27-30**). And these two things combined demonstrated their uncanny ability to be relentlessly blind in heart (**Matthew 15:1-9; John 9:40-41**).

So, at the end of the gospel story when the Jews could take all these things into consideration (and us as well), the realization would be that Jesus' statement about being better than the Pharisees in **Matthew 5:20** wasn't such an uphill task as one thought it to be before. When Jesus got done with His criticism of these so called religious leaders, they were nothing more than sons of the devil and blind guides leading the masses astray. It was most certainly not impossible for the Jews to be better than that and it is most certainly possible for us to be better than them as well. So, how can we be better than the Pharisees?

We can start by actually "practicing what we preach." This is simply another way of saying we need to take God's word seriously and be doers of it and not merely hearers lest we delude ourselves (**James 1:22-25**). We also need to bring the glory to God and not to ourselves (**Matthew 5:16**). It is of utmost importance that we live in such a way that people who do not know God will come to know Him because we are being doers and looking to glorify Him every opportunity we get. Our lights shouldn't be shining so people can see us, but rather so that they can see the One who lives in us. Finally, we need to be willing to open the eyes of our heart and obey Jesus (**Jn. 9:39; 15:14-15**). Unless we are willing to swallow our pride and come to Jesus in humble submission, we will all likewise perish being outside of the kingdom.

When Jesus declared that we all needed to be better than the Pharisees, He meant that unless we have a genuine character of holiness that is pure, loving, forgiving rooted in the fear of God then we are in the same boat as they. May we all strive to look to

Jesus, the greatest example of what it means to be better, and may we strive to be better than the Pharisees.

~via Zanesville church of Christ; Zanesville, Ohio. Taken from Market Street Messenger

THESSALONICA: A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Carrying the wounds and insults of Philippi, Paul and his fellow travelers made their way 90 miles west southwest along the Via Egnatia, and soon arrived in Thessalonica. *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews (Acts 17:1)*. Later, when writing to the Thessalonians, Paul spoke of his time in Philippi. *Having suffered before and been shamefully treated, as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict (1 Thessalonians 2:2)*. The Apostle to the Gentiles was not deterred in his pursuit of the gospel.

Thessalonica was founded by Cassander, King of Macedonia in 315 B.C. Its strategic location on the Aegean Sea produced a lively economy. Its status as a "free city" in Roman times meant that the citizens of Thessalonica had some leeway in their own government. **Acts 17:6** speaks of the "rulers of the city." Thessalonica was the largest city of Macedonia, we are not surprised to read about Paul immediately going into the synagogue - the obvious meeting place for Jews. What did Paul say?

....."it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ." (Acts 17:3) Paul's message was the same as that of Jesus, when the Savior spoke to the Jews during His ministry. *"saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (Luke 9:22)*. The message of the crucified and risen Savior is the constant message throughout the book of Acts. Too, the story of Jesus of Nazareth was integral to Paul's message. This was often a sticking point in accepting or rejecting the gospel. The Jews did not deny that a Messiah would come; they did not, though, believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. The capstone of Paul's teaching was *...this Jesus ...is the Christ*. Paul explained and demonstrated and reasoned

from the Scriptures. His conclusion is: This is that. Jesus is the fulfillment of what you have been reading about in your synagogue services. Paul placed one thing along side of another - the historical Jesus is essential to a true message of the gospel. Jesus is not a myth; He is not mystical; He was/is real, alive and well. That is what the message of the gospel is all about. What reaction did Paul's preaching produce? Some were persuaded and some were not persuaded (**Acts 17:4,5**). Devout Greeks - God-fearers, including several women - accepted the message. **Acts 20:4** mentions two men from Thessalonica: Aristarchus and Secundus. Envious Jews, however, stirred up opposition to Paul's work.

...These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, (Acts 17:6). Paul and his fellow-workers were accused of fomenting political strife. They were "acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar." The Jews played their oft-used trump card: These men have another king. This was a serious charge; the consequences could be fatal. Yet, Paul was not a political or social radical. He was a preacher who sought to turn the hearts of people everywhere to the Lord. Their lives and ours will be turned upside down when, but only when, we yield to Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah. King Jesus must always come first.

Randy Harshbarger

Faith in Hebrews 11

Faith is belief, conviction or confidence in a person or idea. It is a conclusion one holds without physical proof or personal experience. Therefore faith is an intellectual condition of decision or conclusion one holds.

Hebrews 11 is commonly called "*The Faith Chapter*" because of its extensive description, illustration, application and reward of faith. One can get a broad understanding of Bible faith from **Hebrews chapter 11**. Consider the following list of things faith *does*.

- Faith makes better sacrifices -- **Heb. 11:4**
- Faith gives eternal life with God -- **Heb. 11:5**
- Faith is the basis for a relationship with God -- **Heb. 11:6**
- Faith is the result of and is guided by revelation from God -- **Heb. 11:7-8**.
- Faith takes us to and through lonely places and times -- **Heb. 11:7-9**

- Faith enables us to do anything (unreasonable, impossible, courageous, etc -- **Heb. 11:12**).
- Faith trusts God when it does not make sense -- **Heb. 11:17-19**.
- Faith looks beyond this life -- **Heb. 11:20-22**.
- Faith chooses spiritual over material -- **Heb. 11:24-26**.
- Faith is content to wait and endure patiently -- **Heb. 11:9-11, 13-16**.

The rest of the chapter shows us that the faithful are never alone. There have been others and there will be more men and women of faith (**Heb. 11:32-37**). The faithful do not belong here and this world is not worthy of them (**Heb. 11:38**). God's faithful live, die and live in eternity with God's stamp of approval and acceptance.

To receive this testimony of God our faith must be *doing* the things these faithful ones did. Did you notice all the verbs used in God's description of faith?

Don Bunting

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We believe in worshiping and serving the Lord as He has instructed in His word.

Things taught in the Bible that people do not believe, and foster false teaching as a result.

That water baptism is for the remission of sins? Read: Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38).

Please call us to study the Bible. It is refreshing.

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you." (Deuteronomy 4:2)

Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10