

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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The Truth Sometimes Hurts

By Jonathan Perz

How much do you appreciate the truth? The truth is easy to hear when it is flattering, encouraging and uplifting.

However, the truth can sometimes hurt. Do you always desire the truth from those around you, regardless of whether it is favorable or not? Do you always demand the truth from those who preach and teach the gospel of Christ?

The truth pleased the rich young ruler until Jesus told him the one thing he lacked (**Mark 10:17-22**). Some would call such a declaration of truth unloving, but the Spirit called it love (note verse 21). How do we feel when someone courageously and honestly points out our shortcomings (**Prov. 27:6**)?

Most of the Jews who heard Peter on Pentecost appreciated the truth, though it indicted them. They chose

repentance and baptism (**Acts 2:36-40**). Whereas, those Jews who heard Stephen speak that same truth hated what was spoken. They responded by stoning Stephen to death (**Acts 7:54-60**). How do we respond to the truth?

The Galatians loved the apostle Paul—so much that at one point they were willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to Paul. However, in the very next verse, Paul was compelled to ask if he had become their enemy because he told them the truth (**Gal. 4:14-16**). Do we despise those who tell us what we need to hear?

A few reminders should help us to realize the value of truth. 1) Jesus is the truth (**John 14:6**). 2) God's word is truth (**John 17:17**). 3) Knowing and abiding in the truth can set us free (**John 8:31-32**). 4) Those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness will face the wrath of God (**Rom. 1:18**). 5) We must always speak the truth in love (**Eph. 4:15**). 6) We

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should always speak the truth with our neighbors (**Eph. 4:25**). 7) Love rejoices in truth (**1 Cor. 13:6**).

Simply stated, unless we have a love of the truth, we will never appreciate the truths that hurt (**2 Thess. 2:10-12**). Unless we are willing to accept painful truths, we cannot know the sanctifying power of truth (**John 17:17**). Unless we obey the truth, we will be condemned (**Rom. 2:8**).

How much do you appreciate truth? The answer is painfully obvious when we are confronted with agonizing truths that require change in our lives. Change hurts, but the truth saves. How will you respond the next time you are confronted with the truth?

Attitudes Towards the Weak

By Bill Hall

The Messiah's attitude toward the spiritually weak is pictured by Isaiah in the following words: "A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench" (**Isaiah 42:3**).

In our zeal for purity and strength in the church, we may be guilty of doing the very thing

that our Lord does not want done. We create a mental image of what the ideal church ought to be, and then go about to establish one. Every member is going to attend every service. Every member will be "sound" in his convictions. Worldliness will not be tolerated. This church is not going to have the weaknesses that characterize other churches we know of. This is going to be a strong church, a model church.

A new convert is made, and immediately he is indoctrinated in what this church is, and the contribution he is expected to make to the maintaining of this ideal. Each newcomer is viewed as a potential threat. If he's not going to "line up," we don't want him. Weaker members are handled with a "shape up or ship out" attitude. People soon recognize that there is far more concern for the image of the church as an organization than for them as struggling and weak children of God. While the Messiah is tenderly and delicately nursing the "bruised reeds" back to health, we may be there crushing them. While He cups His hand around these fluttering, dimly burning flames to protect what fire is left, we may be there quenching them.

We are not suggesting that unrepentant false teachers and immoral members ought to be tolerated. They must be warned, marked, and withdrawn from. Nor are we suggesting that the weak

ought to be left alone in their weakness. They must be taught, encouraged, reprov'd, rebuked, and exhorted, but with all longsuffering, and with a view toward strengthening them. "Admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all" (1 Thess. 5:14). Ask not what they can do for the church but what the church can do for them.

As long as there is a little life in that "bruised reed," there is hope. Don't crush it! As long as there is a little fire left, it might be fanned to burn more brightly. Don't extinguish it!

A Special Friendship

By Steve Casebolt

(2 Tim 4:6-9 NKJV)

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. Be diligent to come to me quickly."

Apart from our parents our friends probably influence us more than anyone else. For that reason, Paul warns of the danger of keeping the wrong kind of company. (1 Cor 15:33) We can also see the beauty of the proper kind of association that is manifested in the relationship he sustained with Timothy. When the crisis of life knocks at our door from time to time, most of us want someone to stand by us and share the burden. For Christians, this

"someone" is generally a comrade in the gospel who is a spiritual strength and influence in our lives.

The friendship of David and Jonathan aptly illustrates this principle. As Saul was attempting to murder David because of jealousy, David had to flee to the wilderness to escape a cruel death from his own king, whom he had loyally served. David was hiding out in the woods. No doubt, Saul's envy made this a very distressful time for David. The Scriptures reveal that at this point, "Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God." (1 Sam 23:16)

What more can one Christian do for another?? Those who are genuinely devoted to Christ and have nurtured a love for spiritual things generally develop a strong spiritual bond with someone of the same persuasion and conviction. It is a natural sequence: "... everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him." (1 John 5:1 NKJV)

A struggling soldier of the cross can find no greater friend than his beloved brother who will talk to him about spiritual things; share with him inspired words of God, and pray with him to a God at whose throne they both bow.

Another way to express the same thought: a Christian can find no greater friend than the friend who will strengthen his hand in

God. David had such a friend in Jonathan. Paul found such a friend in Timothy.

Have you found a friend like that? Are you a friend like that?