

Truth and Error: How to Tell the Difference

We learn about a thing by experiencing it. Babies learn sweet from sour, hot from cold, and wet from dry by experiencing these things. Even so, we learn spiritual truth by experiencing it in God's word, which is truth (John 17:17). Our use of God's word enables us to readily distinguish between truth and error. Haddon Robinson relates the following story that illustrates this point:

A Chinese boy who wanted to learn about jade went to study with a talented old teacher. This gentleman put a piece of the stone into the youth's hand and told him to hold it tight. Then he began to talk of philosophy, men, women, the sun, and almost everything under it. After an hour he took back the stone and sent the boy home. The procedure was repeated for weeks. The boy became frustrated-when would he be told about jade?-but he was too polite to interrupt his venerable teacher. Then one day when the old man put a stone into his hands, the boy cried out instantly, "That's not jade!"(Biblical Preaching, p. 102).

In Hebrews 5:12-14, the inspired writer is addressing Christians who were not mature enough to tell the difference between right and wrong. He admonishes them with these words:

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

There are two words in the text that shed much light on our current topic. The first is the word "unskilled" and it means "inexperienced." The Hebrew Christians had not progressed and developed because they did not have enough experience in the word. As a result, they were like children who cannot discern right from left; they were spiritual babes who could not tell right from wrong. The second word to consider is the word "exercised." It comes from the Greek word "gymnazo" from which we get our word "gymnasium" - the place where athletes practice and train. Those who regularly use God's word have their senses trained to "discern both good and evil."

Why is it that some brethren don't seem to be able to identify obvious error when they hear it? Why are so many Christians bogged down in their spiritual lives by moral relativism and compromises with the world? Can we not tell the difference between good and evil? Could the root of the problem be that we have had no meaningful experience with the "word of righteousness"?

My friends, may we this day resolve to hold God's word in our hearts - to study it, meditate on it, and practice it -- so that when we're given something else we will be able to simply exclaim, "That's not truth!"

- by Steve Klein

Big "I"

". . . I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Acts 26:29.

Perhaps many of us recognize these words as those spoken by Paul to Agrippa when he told Paul that he had almost been persuaded to become a Christian (KJV). Have we ever stopped to think of what it would require for us to be able to make the same statement that Paul made to Agrippa? It would mean much more than being just a member of the church. It would mean that I could examine the type of life that I am now living, and yet be able to say the world would be a much better place to live in, even if every other person in the world were living that same type of life! It would mean that the universal church of Christ would be more like what the Lord would have it to be, even if every other Christian lived and served the same way that I do! It would mean that the local congregation of the body where I worship would be more active and more zealous in doing that which is pleasing to the Lord, even if every other member of that congregation attended the services, gave of his money, and helped to do that which must be done just as I do. Remember, Paul said ". . . I would to God, that ... all that hear me this day, were ... altogether such as I am . . ." What a sobering thought!

But now, let us apply the thought. Are you a member of the Lord's church? Then ask yourself this question: "If every other person in the local congregation where I am a member worshipped, labored for, and served the Lord as I do, what would this church be like?" We all think it is wonderful for the church to do very great things, but when the time comes to do, oftentimes "Big I" am not to be found.

- by Ray Ferris

What Are You Worth?

Have you ever heard that the raw chemicals that compose your body, if reduced to their simplest form, would be worth less than one dollar on the open market? While this may be true, H. J. Morowitz, writing in a publication called Hospital Practice, has reached a far different conclusion. He priced the various complex ingredients of the human body using a standard catalog from a biochemical company. Prices ranged from hemoglobin at \$2.95 per gram to a hormone called prolactin at \$17,500,000 per gram. If these components were all synthesized from simpler forms, Morowitz estimates that the human body would be worth over 6 billion dollars! He proceeds to speculate about the incredible task of attempting to assemble these ingredients into cells, tissues, organs, etc., (which would require knowledge and ability that men do not possess). Finally, Morowitz concludes that the human body is priceless!

While this is not intended as an exhaustive study into the chemistry of our bodies, it does lead us to a few pertinent observations:

- We, too often, take for granted the wonderful blessings of God's creation, including our amazing physical bodies.

- We can see the value of each individual (body and soul) even more clearly when we consider that God sent his Son to die for us.

- And Jesus' words seem to have extra meaning: "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36,37)

- by Greg Gwin