

11. God Has Told Us How to Handle the Truth of His Mystery

That God has spoken to us in direct and detailed ways the certainty of his will requires us to closely understand and keep his wishes. However, in our day false teachers push us to go in directions away from God and his will. Paul warned us of the dangers in Eph 4:14-15:

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

God has not only revealed his mystery, but he has told us how to handle the truth of that mystery. However, before studying about what God requires of us in handling his truth, a review is in order. These are the lessons thus far:

1. God Has Spoken
2. God's Word
3. God Has Spoken of Nature of His Son
4. God Is
5. God Has Declared His Creation
6. God Has Spoken of the Nature and Coming of His Kingdom
7. God Has Described His Nature
8. God Has Described the Nature of Human Life
9. God Has Told of the End of the Revelation of his Mystery
10. God Has Stated the Destiny of People

God Will Punish Those Who Add to or Take Away from His Prophecy

Rev 22:18-19

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

In the last verses of God's revelation, mankind is warned not to add to or take away from the words of this book. While speaking of *The Revelation*, itself, the principle of not adding to or taking away from God's word runs throughout the Bible. If one dares to alter God's word, he loses the reward of the tree of life and, instead, receives the plagues of the book. Paul, in Gal 1:1-9:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than

what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

In order to see how serious it is when one perverts the gospel of Christ, one should think of the plagues of The Revelation and the eternal condemnation pronounced by Paul. There is literally no way out for one who perverts the gospel or adds to it or takes away from God's revelation.

Jesus Taught That We Are Sanctified in Truth

John 17:16-19

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

The only way to be sanctified is by the truth and God's word is the truth. An altered truth will not sanctify. Therefore there is no salvation in the altered truth of the false teacher. Truth as God set it down is certain to save us, and that salvation is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit of God. Change it and there is no guarantee. Paul set the proposition forward in Eph 1:13-14:

3 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.

Even heart felt and fervent belief is not a path to sanctification. In John 8:31-32, Jews who had believed Jesus were still not truly disciples, for it was the truth that set them free and not their own belief:

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Instead in John 8:42-44, they followed their father the devil, even though they believed Jesus:

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. 43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.** He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The Word of Truth the Gospel of Our Salvation Saves Us

Rom 1:16-17

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

The gospel is the power of God for salvation, and there is no other way. When people obey the truth of the gospel, they are purified, and they are born again by the enduring word of God. Peter attested to this truth of the word of God in 1 Peter 1:22-24:

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

God Has Given Us the Responsibility for the Purity of the Truth

Acts 17:10-12

11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. 12 Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

Since it is the unadulterated truth of God's word that saves people, the people themselves have responsibility to examine the scriptures and make sure what they are hearing is, indeed, the word of God. Paul calls this correctly handling the word of truth in: 2 Tim 2:14-16

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

In 2 Tim 3:16-17, Paul teaches that this truth in the scriptures is all that is needed:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the Last Day, His Truth Will Judge Us

Rom 2:16

16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

The judgment of all will be according to the declarations of the gospel, and those declaration as compared to what we have done here and now, as taught by Paul in 2 Cor 5:10:

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

In the final judgment, a person's action will be compared to God's word. Rev 20:12-15 sets the scene in certain and graphic language:

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.