

Truth, Faith and Reality

The Lord Jesus defines eternal life as knowing the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent (**John 17:3**). Jeremiah heard the Lord say that the New Covenant would result in his people knowing him, “from the least of them to the greatest of them” (**Jeremiah 31:34**). Paul's ambition was to “present every man complete in Christ” (**Colossians 1:28**).

How do we measure up to these descriptions? In the eyes of the One before whom “all things are open and laid bare”, how real is our knowledge of God? Are we afraid to even ask ourselves this sort of question because we fear discovering uncomfortable truth?

Romans 10 outlines the process of faith very clearly and will be useful to us in our desire to make sure that our foundations go down firm and deep into the reality of the Lord Jesus and in honest knowledge of him. Try reading the whole chapter - perhaps the key is **verse 17**. One message of this chapter is that “the word” is the means by which faith is generated. What is this word? It is what God says; the Greek word means something which is, or has been, uttered by the living voice. “The word of Christ” here is simply the message of the good news of Jesus, through which God speaks, we hear and faith comes. There is responsibility here for both speaker and hearer!

A.W.Tozer wrote: “Nothing can take the place of the touch of God in the soul and the sense of Someone there. Real faith, indeed, brings such realisation, for real faith is never the operation of reason upon texts. Where true faith is, the knowledge of God will be given as a fact of consciousness altogether apart from the conclusions of logic.”

If we want to move on, to grow in real knowledge of the living God as our Father and his son Jesus the Christ, we have to

acknowledge that 'our' faith is a result of God speaking to us; it is a response, not our initiative. (See ***Ephesians 2:8***.) Two things become vitally important, to hear God and to obey his voice. It is not surprising that Paul refers to "the obedience of faith" in ***Romans 1:5*** and ***Romans 16:26***. Real faith is simply that; a response of obedience to what God has said.

It sounds incredible but, in amongst all the vast numbers of books, videos, tapes and study aids available to believers today, it seems that there is often "a famine for hearing the words of the Lord" (***Amos 8:11***). We have our doctrines, our traditions, our fashions and our favourites, but when did we last hear, recognise and obey the voice of our Shepherd? (***John 10:3,4,16,27***)

How much of our 'Christian experience' has its origins in what our Father has spoken to us by his Holy Spirit, and how much is simply the result of our own activity or desire for approval from Christian friends or leaders? We may as well face the fact that "it is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (***John 6:63***).

This seems like a 'vicious circle'. We need to hear God to believe and we need to believe in order to hear God! One of the exciting things about ***Romans 10*** is that Paul shows how the Lord breaks into this 'vicious circle' by speaking through his messenger. In **verse 8**, he identifies this 'word of faith' - it is the message which he is declaring! God chooses to commit his liberating word to men and women; as they share it under his direction, he uses it to bring revelation to others. They in turn respond to his voice in the obedience of faith.

In the end, each of us stands before the Lord in our own relationship with him. We would do well to ask him to clarify

what he has shown us, so that we may stand firm in that and not in the insecurity of man's philosophy or ingenuity. Again, Paul had the same desire for the believers in Corinth. See **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**.

Paul's desire for others was the same as his determination for himself, that his and their faith would be completely based on "Jesus Christ, and him crucified". He refused to speak about anything except what Christ had accomplished through him (**Romans 15:18**) and his own early experience backs this up. Read **Galatians 1:11-17**.

We may need to discover afresh what our Father has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth which we have learnt and become familiar with, perhaps over many years, may need to become new and alive to us, perhaps for the first time! It takes some courage to admit that we may have been "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge (or recognition) of the truth" (**2 Timothy 3:7**). However, if it really is our inheritance to get to know the living God by the revelation of his Holy Spirit, why should we waste time and effort on man-made religion and make-believe which may fool people but certainly does not fool our Father?

The usual alternative to spiritual reality in the Lord Jesus is a man-made system of rules and regulations, frameworks by which we judge ourselves and each other. This is not a new problem. Paul faces it head-on in **Colossians 2:16-23**.

The key to continuing reality is there in **verse 19**; "holding fast to the Head". The basic revelation and knowledge of Jesus which we have received should be sufficient for us to be able to stand firmly in him and so fit harmoniously into the overall working and growth of the Body of Christ. If we honestly have to admit that we do not really know how to 'hold fast', then our

earliest awareness and revelation of Jesus has probably not been developed as it needs to have been.

This is not about 'success' or 'failure'. None of us can claim to have succeeded in always holding fast to the Head. The question is, do we know how to hold fast? Do we know how to deal with our own failure?

Have we seen the really effective power of Jesus shedding his blood for us to deal with our guilt? Have we at least begun to experience the reality of being released from the domination of sin in our lives, by virtue of the fact that Jesus' body was broken for us? Have we realised that his triumphant resurrection is not just a promise that we will live after death, but the key to the positive life of the Holy Spirit reproducing the life of Christ in us now, on a practical level? Has it dawned on us that Jesus really is seated at the right hand of the Father, and so the power and authority of the Holy Spirit himself is poured out upon us? In short, have we seen that we have been joined to Jesus? (**1 Corinthians 1:30**)

If these things are at least starting to become real to us, there is some foundation to stand when the shaking process starts (**Hebrews 12:25-29**). It is awesome to see that created (and man-made) things will be shaken and removed and that only the unshakeable kingdom will remain. This kingdom is one that cannot be invented by man; it can only be received. Good reason to express our gratitude!

"Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name" (**Hebrews 13:15**)

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