

February 27, 2022

Transformed

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

"...there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful way and will bring the way of truth into disrepute."

II Peter 1:12-2:22

What is truth? In our day, as has nearly always been the case, truth is difficult to define and even more difficult to maintain. I am convinced that one of the biggest obstacles to finding and following truth is that many of us do not understand the difference between truth and opinion.

Because of this lack of understanding, opinions can be and often are a dangerous commodity. All of us are free to hold our own opinions on lots of issues and to live our own lives based on those opinions. The Apostle Paul would warn us however, not to let our opinions destroy our unity and God's redemptive work and not to condemn ourselves by what we choose to believe.

He writes, **"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of...whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves..."**

In our context for today, Peter would further warn us about the importance of clearly identifying and holding onto our source of truth. For believers that source is, or at least it should always be, Scripture. In turning to Scripture as our source of truth we are accepting the that those who wrote it were **"...carried along by the Holy Spirit."**

Jesus promised us that **"...when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth..."** (John 16:13) Through Scripture, God has given us truth. Paul would tell us that all Scripture is **"...God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."** (II Timothy 3:16-17)

For believers then, our truth is found in Scripture. When we set aside the truth of Scripture for our opinions or for the opinions of others we have lost our way and may well be condemning ourselves. And if we insist that others accept our opinions as truth we may well have become the false teachers that Peter warns us about.

We don't often see ourselves as perspective false teachers, but I am convinced that we can easily become just that. A perfect example from Scripture is found in Jesus' teaching on love in Matthew 5:43-44. He says, **"You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."**

The Scripture-based truth for believers is always and only, **'Love your neighbor...'** But human opinion would argue that it only makes sense to also **"...hate your enemy..."** But opinion generated through human reason got it wrong. God does not give us the right under any circumstances to hate anyone, even those who persecute us. Thus, anyone who teaches me or you that it is 'right' to hate someone because...has become a false teacher.

For the believer truth based in Scripture is the only guide to truth. Opinions, even our own, can never be a sure guide to living the lives that God has called us to live. Do we have the 'right' to hold our opinions? Yes. Do we have the 'right' to live by our opinions? Yes. Do we have the 'right' to demand that others live by those same opinions? No.

God clearly and obviously teaches me his truths through Scripture. Can I twist those truths through the application of my opinion? Yes. Can I condemn myself for what opinions I have chosen to accept as truth? Yes. Can I, by doing so, become a false teacher? Absolutely!

