

Truth, Mercy & Knowledge of God

Joe Slater

Could it happen to us? Would the Lord ever say to His church what He said to ancient Israel? *“For the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land”* (Hosea 4:1).

What a horrible indictment! First, they lacked truth. When **truth** is absent, what replaces it? Lies rush in to fill the vacuum. Lying was but one of many ways Israel “broke all restraint” (v. 2). As to the **truth** of God’s word, Israel considered it a “strange thing” (8:12).

But **truth** also pertains to faithfulness. Faithful spouses remains “true” to each other. As the Lord’s spouse, Israel was anything but faithful! The northern kingdom worshiped idols from its inception. Seventeen times in Hosea, God charged them with harlotry! Even in their dealings with each other, they were unfaithful. Adultery was rampant (4:2). They swore oaths (4:2), but didn’t keep them (10:4).

Second, Israel lacked **mercy** (loving kindness). In contrast, they stole and murdered repeatedly (4:2). Where mercy is wanting, the poor and vulnerable suffer most. If Israel wished to return to God’s favor, she would have to show mercy (6:6 & 12:6).

Finally, Israel lacked the **knowledge of God**. They had long since forfeited their fellowship with Him, and had no interest in being like Him. God is faithful; but they were not! God is merciful, but they were not! They would be destroyed, merely because they didn’t know things **about** God, but because they didn’t **know** Him (6:4).

Yes, it could happen to us! Let us learn and love God’s word, which is truth (John 17:17). Let us be true (faithful) to Him and to each other. Let us show mercy as the “good Samaritan” did. And let us not only know about Him, but know Him in intimate fellowship!

An Aid Worth Owning

The production of Bible study aids is big business. Millions are spent each year on commentaries, class books, study Bibles and computer programs designed to help us understand the Bible. Some of these can be of help, but they can also be dangerous.

Recently one form of Bible study aid has made its appearance that, I hope, no one will find objectionable. It is, pure and simple, the Bible itself – without note, comment or even chapter and verse markings.

Most of us are aware of the fact that the practice of dividing the Bible into chapters and verses did not arise until more than one-thousand years after the apostolic age. But what we may not realize is how much those chapter and verse divisions could be detracting from our Bible reading.

As originally written, the thought in a given book of the Bible flowed continuously from beginning to end. As printed in most of our Bibles today, that thought is broken up into small pieces. The way most Bibles are printed unconsciously discourages us from reading large sections. Instead, the appearance of the text on the printed page tends to atomize the thought into disjointed pieces.

Several publishers now offer Bibles (generally called “reader’s Bibles”) that do away with the atomizing verse markings. These Bibles may not be handy for use in a class, but they might do something interesting to your personal Bible reading. You might find yourself reading more scripture, and enjoying it more, with one of these Bibles.

You can purchase a Bible without verse markings for as little as \$5 (on Kindle) or for as much as \$100 if you prefer the hardcopy, large print, multi-volume approach. I highly recommend that you give this a try.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL

One thing that impresses me every time I read the book of Acts is the fact that the gospel is for all. Before leaving for heaven, Jesus told His apostles “you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Fulfilling this, the apostles (and those they trained) went all over the known world converting people from all walks of life. Notice the different classes of people that Acts mentions as being converted by the gospel of Christ:

- * The Jews (Acts 2:37-47)
- * “Both men and women” (Acts 5:14)
- * The Samaritans (Acts 8:5ff)
- * An African (Ethiopian) office holder (Acts 8:27-39)
- * An educated, fanatical, religious leader (Paul - Acts 9:17; 22:1-16)
- * A good, decent, God-fearing Roman soldier (Cornelius – Acts 10:1-4; 34-48)
- * A politician (proconsul - Acts 13:12)
- * A businesswoman (Lydia - Acts 16:13-15)
- * A heathen jailer (Acts 16:25-34)
- * “Prominent” people (Acts 17:12)
- * Some people who had bad reputations (the Corinthians - Acts 18:7-8)
- * Religious people mistaken as to the plan of salvation (Acts 19:1-5)
- * Folks who practiced occultism (Acts 19:18)

On and on we could go, but you get the idea! There are no classes excluded in the gospel of God. It is good for the young and the old. There is no barrier because of gender, race, or social status (Gal. 3:28).

Friends, we need to take the gospel to all (Mark 16:16), for the gospel is for all. As the song so aptly states:

Of one the Lord has made the race, Thro' one has come the fall;
Where sin has gone must go His grace: The Gospel is for all.
Say not the heathen are at home, Beyond we have no call;
For why should we be blest alone? The Gospel is for all.
Received ye freely, freely give; From every land they call;
Unless they hear they cannot live: The Gospel is for all.

--Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY)