

"Buy the truth and sell it not." Proverbs 23:23

Someone has said that the two most important questions ever asked are: "What is truth?" and "What think ye of Christ?" We would add that the questions are very nearly one, since Christ said, "I am the truth". Truth has been defined as the reality of things as opposed to falsehood, illusion and delusion; verity against vanity, reality against appearance, substance against shadow, certainty against doubt. Men need and want the positive, whole, absolute, and infallible truth. We can not afford, and more especially in matters of the soul's nature and destiny, to deal in guesses or vague speculation. A candid man will never ask, "What would I like to believe?", but "What is the truth?" The wise thing for every one of us to do is to follow the directions of this proverb and "Buy the truth and sell it not."

When the wise man gave this advice, he had the whole range of truth in his mind. But, he especially had in mind moral and religious truth. This text makes it very plain that it is our duty to secure the truth as our possession. The text urges us to purchase the truth and it does so for the following reasons:----

1. We absolutely need it
2. It is certainly available
3. It is extremely valuable
 - (1) It frees from disagreeable doubts about religion
 - (2) It opens an infinite source of pleasure
 - (3) It equips for Christian and social service
 - (4) It strengthens in the approach of death

All things worth possessing have their price. To this rule truth forms no exception. If we would come into this valuable possession we must pay the price. We must pay the price of:----

I. Attention

When the photographer attempts to take the picture of a little child the great difficulty is to get the child to look steadily at one object. It looks this way and that, and the impression is blurred and imperfect. One reason that people do not have clearer impression of the truth is that they do not give truth more attention. Looking hither and thither, instead of at the one object of search, of course their impressions are vague and indistinct. If we are to possess the truth, we must go in quest of it and go to the mart of truth for it. In other words, we must pay the price of attention.

II. Meditation

Meditation is somewhat different from attention or thought. Meditation is to the mind what digestion is to the body. Unless the food is digested the body receives no benefit from it. If we would receive the fullest benefit from what we read or hear, there must be that mental digestion known as meditation, that is fixing our thoughts upon it. As someone has said, "Talking makes a ready man, reading makes a full man, writing makes a correct man, and thinking makes a deep man." One price of truth, then, is patient, thoughtful meditation and reflection. If we would buy the truth we must pay the price which Paul intimates when he writes to Timothy, "Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them."

III. Humility of Spirit

The man who thinks he knows all that is worth knowing, of course, can not receive new truth. His very self-conceit is a barrier to his acquisition of truth. Humility of spirit is the price of truth. How plainly God tells us this through the lips of the wise Solomon when he says, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him."

IV. Prayer

Through this channel we are able to bring down grace from above.

V. Abandonment of Prejudice

Often, men are so prejudiced against the truth that they cannot come into possession of it. What will prejudice not do? It was prejudice that made the Jews call Christ a Samaritan, a devil, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, and reject Him and crucify Him. It was prejudice which made them drag the apostles before the rulers and cry out, "Away with them! It is not fit that they should live!" It was prejudice that made Ahab hate the upright Micaiah, even when telling him the truth that would have saved his life. One of the hardest things in this world is to make people accept a truth they are prejudiced against. Some people are so prejudiced against the church, or certain doctrines of the Bible, or certain Christians they know, that they never for one moment even give religion a candid hearing. While this lasts you might as well try to preach to a stone as to lead them to God. The abandonment of prejudice is the price of truth. This is what Christ meant when he said to the Jews, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

VI. Labor

In seeking, securing, and keeping the truth labor is absolutely necessary.

VII. Obedience

In other words, we must practice the truths that we learn. The truth would control every feeling, shape every plan, and dictate every action.

VIII. Indifference to Consequences

See Galileo experimenting to prove that the earth revolves. His question is not, "If I prove it, will they cast me into prison?" but, "What is truth?" We know an intelligent man who will not accept the truth that boot-legging is wrong, because doing so would logically compel him to give up his well-paying business. It is because of his regard for consequences that he shuts out the truth. So there are many who shut out the light of truth from their souls because accepting it would compel them to make restitution to those they have wronged, or give up some habit of sin they have formed. The only question with us should be, "What is truth?" and not, "What will be the consequences of accepting the truth?" This is what Solomon means when he says, "Buy the truth." Buy it at any price. It is indeed a pearl of great price, and he is a wise man who will make this treasure his own.

We get truth by having our eyes opened to observe it; by reading, meditation, and conversation. To attain the truth, be attentive. Do not be discouraged at labor. Suspend your judgment. Let prejudice yield to reason. Be teachable.

Truth, once purchased, should never be sold. "Buy the truth and sell it not." The truth can be sold. It can be sold from a spirit of mere cowardice; from a feeling of false charity and selfish complaisance; from falling into what is called "the spirit of the age"; for power, for fame, or for worldly pleasure. Judas and Demas sold the truth for money, Herod sold it for sensual gratification, Pilate sold it for popularity, but the true followers of Christ will not sell the truth at any price. Many sell the truth by betraying it on account of fear or allurements, by holding it in unrighteousness, selfishness, treachery, and inconsistency.

The truth should never be sold. It has a value beyond all you can get for it. Its value does not rise and fall like the value of other things. Its value grows the longer you keep it. It buys all other good things that last. "Buy the truth and sell it not."