

GEMS OF TRUTH

NUMBER 11

JUNE 22, 2012

FROM THE EDITOR



One concern that I've had for many years is that so often there is what appears to be a "disconnect" between a person's lofty spiritual ideals and their behavior, especially when something happens that threatens their comfort zone. Those who have very strong religious beliefs often respond with a total lack of any kind of love or humility when their beliefs are questioned by someone who has an inquiring mind. It would appear that having correct beliefs

takes priority over how they treat others, especially those who differ from them. I've seen many devout "Christians" totally lose all sense of human dignity and respect for others over doctrinal disputes. Those who claim to follow Jesus are often quick to file lawsuits, have conflict with their neighbors, or engage in questionable business ethics. Somehow the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are very easily forgotten. We are all on a spiritual journey together and let's remember that how we treat others is the *absolute* test of the genuineness of our faith. A common thread in this issue of **GEMS OF TRUTH** would be practical, everyday applications of truth principles. I think these words summarize it very well:

**Why do you not practice what you preach?
St. Jerome**

If you wish to be on my email list to receive a notice when a new **GEMS OF TRUTH** is available or send some comments contact me as below:

Tom Durst

tomdurst1@msn.com

Phone: (509) 487-1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Click on the page # or scroll down to find each article.]

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST	3
PRECIOUS AND WONDERFUL PROMISES	4
NOT UNDER THE LAW	5
FALSE EVIDENCE APPEARING REAL	6
BE READY FOR LOVE	7
LIKE A ROARING LION	8
ARE YOU REALLY LISTENING?	9
BE DILIGENT	10
LOVE YOUR ENEMIES	11
A HUMAN POINT OF VIEW	12
WHAT IS THE CHAFF TO THE WHEAT?	13

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 2:17-18 Common English Bible (CEB)

17 Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way. This was so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, in order to wipe away the sins of the people. 18 He's able to help those who are being tempted, since he himself experienced suffering when he was tempted.

Hebrews 4:14-16 New International Version (NIV)

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are —yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.



In the gospels we have Jesus “the Son of God” and “the Son of Man.” I find great comfort in knowing that we have a Savior who came to this earth and lived among humanity, experiencing the same kinds of temptations and struggles that we all face everyday. Indeed, He was “tempted in every way, just as we are” and He overcame by dependence upon His Father. Heaven and earth were united in Jesus the Christ. We are privileged to live in union with Him everyday and partake of His life and thus also overcome. We can “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence” and with full assurance that we shall “find grace to help us in our time of need.”

In the Old Testament sanctuary service there were priests who mediated between God and the people. Now we have a Savior Who has ascended to the right hand of the Father and continually presents His perfect life in our behalf and empowers us to live that life in peace and joy.

PRECIOUS AND WONDERFUL PROMISES



2 Peter 1:4 Common English Bible (CEB)

4 Through his honor and glory he has given us his precious and wonderful promises, that you may share the divine nature and escape from the world's immorality that sinful craving produces.

I can see a great danger of allowing ourselves to be disempowered spiritually and forget that the Bible is *full* of "precious

and wonderful promises" which relate to every area of human existence and meet every human need. You will notice that we "share the divine nature" as we feed on and assimilate God's promises. I have found such to be the case in my life experience. The Bible has come under so much attack and dissection over the past few decades that if we don't watch and pray continually we'll lose the simplicity of the hope that we have in Christ Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 11:3).

Those who relate to the spiritual journey largely from the perspective of acquiring information have little foundation to build upon to face the challenges that come to all of us. It is possible to have a head full of "academic information" about theology and philosophy and yet not know God in a personal way at all. I'm not an expert in all of the technicalities of Biblical languages and such but over the past 60+ years I've found joy in depending upon God and the promises of His Word and continue to encourage others to do the same. I sincerely believe that the Bible, if studied with a sincere desire to do God's will, will bring life and joy to every seeker. It has been such for me. I refuse to allow myself to get sidetracked by those who badly misuse the Scriptures or by those who wish to argue and split hairs about various beliefs.

"The Bible is the written word of God, and because it is written it is confined and limited by the necessities of ink and paper and leather. The Voice of God, however, is alive and free as the sovereign God is free. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.' The life is in the speaking words. God's word in the Bible can have power only because it corresponds to God's Word in the universe. It is the present Voice which makes the written word powerful. Otherwise it would lie locked in slumber within the covers of a book." (A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*. Christian Publications. 1948. pg. 74)

NOT UNDER THE LAW

Galatians 5:18 Common English Bible (CEB)

18 But if you are being led by the Spirit, you aren't under the Law.

If you do a concordance study of the phrase "under the law" you'll find Paul using it several times in contrast to being guided by the Spirit, living according to love, etc. I found 10 such references in the King James Version. This is a

prominent Pauline theme and since he was a devout follower of the law for so many years before becoming a follower of Jesus he was well qualified to address the topic.



The best way to understand the expression "under the law" would be to substitute some kind of religion in place of "law." For example we might say, "not under the Baptist religion," "not under the Catholic religion," "not under the Buddhist religion," "not under the Adventist religion," etc. You can put any kind of religion there and better understand the impact of what Paul is teaching. True Christian liberty is only found as we are delivered from following the whims of the human ego which brings endless suffering. At the same time we have freedom from being *obligated* to follow the dictates, rules, and regulations of some particular religion. Every religion has some very positive and helpful teachings but also every one has a "dark side." Many sincere people simply can never fit into nor obey all of the many "religious codes" and thus feel under constant guilt and condemnation. This is being "under the law." The rules and regulations of a particular religion that may help some folks "stay on track" can be another person's deadly poison. I met a man once who said that he converted to Islam because trying to follow its many rules and regulations gave him more structure in his life and helped keep him away from his addictions. So we have freedom in Christ to observe or ignore all the rules and beliefs that don't fit our situation and yet not look down upon nor judge others that find security in following them. Jesus observed many of the customs of the Jewish religion and violated others. In every case the issue seemed to be what would be the most helpful to the people to whom He was ministering. The two most important teachings of Paul are to "live in love" and "be guided by the Spirit" and a particular religion [meaning a belief system] may or may not work for us.

FALSE EVIDENCE APPEARING REAL



2 Timothy 1:7 New King James Version (NKJV)

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

It is only natural to have fears but the mistake that we make is in giving away our God given power. We may step back, look right at the fear, and realize that whatever we fear is not from God

but from the enemy of all peace. I often pray in a way that disarms the fear and for me frequently this is asking for God's help to see *beyond* the fearful appearance, which most often involves people. Many times I pray, "God help me to see Your image and likeness in that person" and I use their name if I happen to know it. By using this very simple prayer I've often seen whatever I was fearing or possibly annoying me [and annoyance is just another form of fear] just vanish before my very eyes.

“The fears that assault us are mostly simple anxieties about social skills, about intimacy, about likeableness, or about performance. We need not give emotional food or charge to these fears or become attached to them. We don’t even have to shame ourselves for having these fears. Simply ask your fears, “What are you trying to teach me?” Some say that FEAR is merely an acronym for “False Evidence Appearing Real.”---From Everything Belongs, p. 143” — Richard Rohr

BE READY FOR LOVE

1 John 3:1-3 English Standard Version (ESV)

1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.



There is a perverse element in human nature that wants to reject love and to sometimes reject those who could love us the most. This is something that totally baffles us by any process of reasoning and makes no sense whatsoever. What could be more wonderful than to love and be loved? When the Son of God came to this earth to bestow all of Heaven's love upon the human race the religious leaders of His own people were the first in line to spurn Him (see John 1:11). I feel it a waste of energy to try to explain the "why" of such behavior but take it as a challenge to do some serious heart searching and spiritual "house cleaning." This will help me to relate with more compassion towards those who may reject the love that I would like to give them and also to watch lest I find myself rejecting the love that others would like to give me. We all have this lethal element buried deeply in the recesses of our unconscious and need to "watch and pray" everyday lest we fall into the trap of either rejecting or simply neglecting to nourish love. In our innermost being we *are* love because we are spiritual beings in God's image and likeness. However, we have fallen into a sleep of death and have forgotten who we are and we need to realize this simple fact and pray for our own awakening and help others to awaken by gently leading them in love back to the Father's House. Sometimes we forget the "gentleness" part and use human persuasion, judgment, and control and this never works; only love will reach the love that is so often deeply hidden in others.

"Be ready for love when it does come. Prepare the field and be ready to nourish love. Be loving, and you will be lovable. Be open and receptive to love." Louise Hay

LIKE A ROARING LION



1 Peter 5:8 New King James Version (NKJV)

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

I have no desire to participate in the conversation about whether the devil is a literal being and just how he should be visualized. What I see in this verse is a metaphor for the human ego being “like a roaring lion” waiting to leap into action at any time to devour us or simply render us ineffective and powerless in our spiritual journey. The ego rears its ugly

head in so many ways and no one is exempt. Even something as simple as a minor irritation because of what someone says or does will bring suffering. The results of yielding to the ego (that old devil adversary) will eventually show up in physical problems which add more stress and lock us into an endless cycle of death. The temptation is to ignore the ego-based causes of problems and seek for mere symptomatic relief instead of getting at the root of the problem. It takes a constant humbling of heart to deal honestly with our issues but we have many wonderful promises in the Bible of God’s enabling grace freely given at every step of the way. We can strengthen ourselves greatly by dwelling on these promises daily and thus fortify ourselves against the “wiles of the devil” (see Ephesians 6:11, KJV). We are not left as orphans as we press on the upward way, ever seeking higher ground.

I find it best to daily search my own heart and pray for deliverance from this “roaring lion” that would devour me or take away my spiritual power so that I can’t be a true blessing in the world. I invite others to join me in this.

ARE YOU REALLY LISTENING?

Luke 14:34-35 The Message (MSG)

"Salt is excellent. But if the salt goes flat, it's useless, good for nothing.

"Are you listening to this? Really listening?"

The matter of clear and accurate communication is one of the most serious issues that we all face. In the Bible we have frequent references to "having ears and not hearing" and "having eyes and not seeing." We so often *think* we understand what someone else says based upon a very surface listening on our part. We *hear some words* but aren't really *listening* and so misunderstandings constantly arise. People are often accused of saying something that was very far from their intentions. We are very quick to jump to conclusions based upon a very superficial and often hasty judgment of what someone really meant. In addition we tend to *read into what someone says our own preconceived ideas*.



Almost all misunderstandings that arise in our daily life are based upon lack of clear communication and I think we should seriously look for solutions to this challenge. A good place to start is to resist the constant temptation to think that our own opinions about the subject are so important. This blocks us from careful listening because what the other person is saying doesn't really matter if our ideas are perceived to be so much better. We just can't wait to interrupt what the other person is saying so that we can put forth our opinions.

Another problem is that we are so "full" of our own problems and life issues that we seldom really listen unselfishly to those of anyone else. A good principle that Jesus taught that would apply here is that "he who would save his life shall lose it and he that would lose his life shall save it." If we are willing to let go of our attachment to everything in our own lives and truly enter the realm of helping others it is amazing how many of our own issues will not seem so large anymore and at times will simply vanish. This has happened to me many times.

I am personally very committed to doing everything within my power to become better at communication and especially at being a good listener. This takes considerable effort but the rewards are very great even from the viewpoint of our own best self-interest. People will want to be our friends much more if they feel we have a genuine interest in them. There is nothing that folks want more than for someone to listen to *their* story. Most have very little interest in listening to *our* story.

Are you really listening... or are you just waiting for your turn to talk?--Robert Montgomery

BE DILIGENT

2 Peter 1:10 New King James Version (NKJV)

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.

Here are some synonyms for *diligence* that will help us understand better the meaning of this verse.

Diligence: industrious, hard-working, assiduous, conscientious, particular, punctilious, meticulous, painstaking, rigorous, careful, thorough, sedulous, earnest; persevering, persistent, tenacious, zealous, dedicated, committed, unflagging, untiring, tireless, indefatigable, dogged; laborious.

People will pursue many years of study and have extended years of internship to become qualified for such professions as medicine and law. These years involve countless hours of listening to lectures, study, lab work, and more. I've heard so often over these many years, "Oh, I need to get back on track with my prayer and study times. I've been so busy." I've thought so many times, "What if even a *small* part of the efforts that are expended in making money, entertainment, and following the pursuits of the world were put into seeking God, prayer, and spiritual study what would be the results?" Is it possible to be half-hearted in our spiritual journey and expect to find peace, love, joy, and empowerment to overcome our issues and help others? I recognize that the forms of spiritual disciplines will vary considerably from one person

to another but unless we put utmost diligence into our spiritual journey we shouldn't be surprised if we experience meager results. The grace of God that is bestowed upon us so freely doesn't do away with the necessity of diligence on our part but gives both the motivation and empowerment to *be diligent*. Were it not for God's grace none of us would even have a desire to seek God nor would we be really motivated to pursue our journey. God's grace to me means that I work from a platform of full and complete acceptance with God at every step of the way and this motivates me as nothing else ever could to keep going forward with all vigor.

He who labors diligently need never despair; for all things are accomplished by diligence and labor. --Menander

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Luke 6:27-28 Common English Bible (CEB)

27 "But I say to you who are willing to hear: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. 28 Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you

Jesus had a way of going beyond "the letter of the law" to much deeper meanings of

timeless truth. He taught a wider application of such things as who is our neighbor and what murder and adultery are about. Our "enemies" could be people or circumstances that we allow to take away our peace by causing even a slight irritation. A barking dog in our neighbor's back yard or someone talking in our face on their cell phone could be such an enemy. We have potential "enemies" virtually everyday. Anything that could rob us of our love, joy, and peace is an "enemy."

Many times when I've silently blessed a person or a group of people that could be regarded as an "enemy" I've seen marvelous changes for the better in a matter of a few minutes. We may not always see immediate results but we must choose to love anyway instead of allowing irritation and anger. We have many promises that when we



depend upon our Savior instead of taking things into our own hands we shall receive help beyond what we could ever imagine. God is faithful to His promises.

**Everything negative - pressure, challenges - is all an opportunity for me to rise.--
Kobe Bryant**

A HUMAN POINT OF VIEW



2 Corinthians 5:16 New Living Translation (NLT)

16 So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!

As we grow in spiritual maturity we will increasingly look past all of the many labels that we human beings put on one

another. Some of these labels may be useful for human interaction but we must learn to see something deeper than just the outward appearance. Our desire should always be to see the inward beauty, no matter how deeply it may be buried. Sometime when you have some leisure time go to a public place, observe people carefully, and then ask God to help you see something precious in each one. If you feel uncomfortable doing this see it as an opportunity for you to draw closer to God so that you may love all people more fully and thus be more like God who causes the rain to fall equally on both the just and the unjust.

Labels are for filing. Labels are for clothing. Labels are not for people. ~Martina Navratilova

WHAT IS THE CHAFF TO THE WHEAT?

Jeremiah 23:28 New King James Version (NKJV)

28 “The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream;
And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully.
What *is* the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord.



These words of Jeremiah often come to mind, "**What is the chaff to the wheat?**" When there are so many needs crying for attention in a hurting world I'm convicted more than ever that I need to spend much time in communion with God rather than to allow myself to get sidetracked into controversies or waste my time on things that are meaningless. When I see the overwhelming problems of the world and of those close to me as well I must be in touch with the Source of all true power. If I allow myself to become enmeshed in the insanity that is so apparent

in much of human behavior I can never do anything to make a difference. The words of Scripture to “come up higher” mean that my mission is to not deal primarily on the level of problems but to rise *above* them to the Kingdom of God.



Contact the Editor with comments and requests to be on the email list:

tomdurst1@msn.com

This website below has archived copies of GEMS OF TRUTH in text only format and many other related devotional

articles. You will see GEMS OF TRUTH towards the top of the menu.

<http://advaita.proboards.com/index.cgi>

This site has archived copies of GEMS OF TRUTH in PDF format which has pictures and large print. Just look for the GEMS OF TRUTH link on the site:

<http://www.tomdurst.com/>