



February 16, 2024

Sanctify Them by Your Truth

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

What is truth? We live in a time when established norms and standards are under continuous question and assault. The pressure to not just conform increases daily. It's hard to tell what is true or false, or a mixture of the two.

Is there a basis for evaluating right and wrong?

Are you part of an ever growing small group that understands the answer to that question? You probably can quote from memory the answer. Jesus, the captain of our salvation, addressed the eleven disciples following that final Passover in the upper room. *"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. . . Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."* NIV (John 17:14, 17) We are sanctified and set apart from the world at large by being given the truth, yielding to our Father, and the understanding of the Word of God.

Christ warned the disciples that they needed to be on guard to resist the influence of those who would rise up from among the congregations and seek to draw disciples away from the truth and to themselves. It's like everything else very hard to discern or see, but it has always been the case.

We have the record of Paul requesting the elders from the Ephesus area to come to him at Miletus. Paul warned them, *"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples*

after themselves." (Acts 20:29-30) Jesus gave a similar warning, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15)

We've been looking at the church of God over the ages in these last few Friday night letters.

Going back in history, the small group of believers in Rhode Island faced harsh opposition. Records of the early members mention that for a while those who had begun to observe the Sabbath continued to go to church on Sunday while also meeting in private homes on Saturday. The Sunday-keeping ministers preached against them and called them "heretics" and claimed the Ten Commandments were done away. Some of those who had accepted the seventh day Sabbath were influenced to reject it and they returned to Sunday keeping. Those who remained convinced of the Sabbath wrote to the church in London for advice and guidance. "Dr. Edward Stennett wrote to them from London as follows: "If the church will hold communion with these apostates from the truth, you ought then to desire to be fairly dismissed from the church; which if the church refuse, you ought to withdraw yourselves, and not be partakers of other men's sins..." The letter was dated March 6, 1670. (The Incredible History of God's True Church-Chapter Thirteen, Fletcher)

These Sabbath keepers continued to meet with the Sunday-keeping church until persecution against them escalated in June, 1671. The Sunday-promoting elder preached a strong sermon condemning the Sabbath keepers and claiming "the Ten Commandments were given only to the Jews". During the debates that followed, "William Hiscox pointed out that "The ground of our difference is that you and others deny God's law." It took the Sabbath-keepers over six years to learn the difficult lesson that it is not possible to keep the Sabbath and at the same time, remain in a church which kept a different day and preached against it and many other parts of God's law. They withdrew from further fellowship with the Sunday congregation and formed a Sabbath-keeping church in December, 1671. In 1671... Stephen Mumford, William Hiscox, Samuel Hubbard, Roger

Baster, and three sisters, entered into church covenant together, thus forming the first seventh-day Baptist Church in America. For more than thirty years after its organization, the Newport church included nearly all persons observing the seventh day in the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut." (The Incredible History of God's True Church-Chapter Thirteen, Fletcher)

The Baptist historians usually define these early American Sabbatarian congregations as "Seventh Day Baptist." When reading the actual records left by these people, it is clarified that they considered themselves to be "the Church of God" at Piscataway, New Jersey, or "the Church of God dwelling at Shrewsbury."

The apostle Paul would agree with the decision of these early New England Sabbath keepers to withdraw from the group that held to Sunday-keeping and other non-biblical teachings. Paul said, "*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . . Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord."* (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17)

It's a daunting task to follow the truth of God and yet dwell peaceable with all men if at all possible. As time marches on we will see that if we obey God we will simply not fit in well with most. Prophecy tells all that as time moves forward the choice we make in following our Father and His Son will not be a popular one in any nation.

Friends, we too must study daily to know what the truth is as revealed in God's word, and then firmly hold on to it. Some never question anything in the church they attend. Have we proven from the scripture what we believe? We must also always be vigilant and alert to reject error and not simply continue along to "go along, and get along" with those who would lead us away from the truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)...more next time.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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