

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

SOUL-SAVING LESSONS **“Standing in Truth”**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth” (Eph. 6:14). Welcome to our series of soul-saving lessons. One of the most important things that a person can learn in order to make sure that his soul is right with God is the importance of truth. The Proverbs writer said, “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23). Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32). It also was Jesus Who clearly taught that the Word of God is truth when He said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). Today we need to clarify what it means to stand on the truth. Standing on the truth does not mean that we have the right to be unkind or mean spirited. That is not at all what the Bible teaches. Yes, we must “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). Yes, we must show and reprove the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). But as we do that, our motives must be correct. The Bible says that we are to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). It is true that people do not really care how much we know until they know how much we care. When we speak about standing in truth, our motive is to teach the truth in love because more than anything we want people to go to Heaven. This does not mean that there are not sincere religious people in the world today. There are multitudes of sincere, religious people. But it is possible to be sincere, yet sincerely wrong. In Romans 10:1-2 Paul said of his own countrymen (the Jews), “They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” There are people who are sincere and zealous, and who want to please God. But they do not know the truth. Romans 6:17 says that we must “obey from the heart that form of doctrine” that has been delivered by God. We must do only what the Scriptures say if we want to be right with the Father. Standing in truth means that we will speak the truth in love even when we confront sincere people who are sincerely wrong. We want those people to be right with God and to have the hope of Heaven.

How does a person stand in truth? What are some things that we need to know in order to be able to stand in the truth? Standing in the truth means that we must study and teach what the Lord and His apostles taught. We must study the Bible, and we must make sure that we say what the Lord and His apostles taught. We also must live our lives by such teachings. The importance of study is clearly seen in the Scriptures. If we are going to stand in the truth, we must study the truth. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we are told, “Study to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” We must study the Bible so that we can be right and be approved in God’s sight. How I love the example of the Bereans that is presented in Acts 17:11—“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” Look at their example. They had a readiness of mind. They wanted to know God’s will. So, when something that was claimed to be true was presented, they searched the Scriptures (the real book of truth) to make sure that it was correct and that they were right with God. Proverbs 15:26 tells us, “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer.” In Isaiah 34:16 we are told to “search in the book of the Lord” to see if the things we are told are

true. As God's people, we must be like the scribe Ezra who "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach its statutes and judgment in all Israel" (Ezra 7: 10). We must prepare our hearts to come to the Bible and say, "I am going to study this book, and whatever Jesus and His inspired men taught is what I am going to do."

We stand in the truth by saying only what the Bible says. Not only do we stand in the truth by studying what God has said, but we also stand in the truth by saying what the Bible says. I love the words of Jeremiah 37:17. An evil king asked a wonderful question when he said to Jeremiah, "Is there any word from the Lord?" In Romans 4:3, Paul mentioned this same idea when he asked, "What does the Scripture say?" What has God said about the matter? Is there any word from the Lord? Where can we find it in the Bible? That needs to be our mindset if we really want to stand in the truth. In John 2:5 Jesus' mother made a statement that should be the motto of every Christian. As Jesus was about to perform His first miracle (turning water into wine), Mary looked at the servants and said, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Can you find better advice in the Bible than that? Whatever Jesus says, we should do it. We do not have to question it. We do not need to put our own pre-conceived ideas into the mix. If Jesus said it, then we must simply do it. In 2 Peter 1:3 we are told that within the Scriptures God has given to us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us." The good news is that all we need is the Bible. When we stand in the truth, not only are we doing what is right, but it is all we need. The truth is God's inspired Word (2 Tim 3:16). We learn in John 17:17 that it is "all truth." I love the words of Psalm 119:160 where the psalmist said, "The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever." From Genesis 1:1 to the very last word in Revelation 22, the entirety of the text is God's truth. Here is the application of that. If we are going to study what the Lord and His disciples taught, and if we are going to say what they have said, then we must not "go beyond that which is written" (1 Cor. 4:6). We will be blessed only if we do the things that are written in the book (Rev. 22:14). We will be right with God only if we do not add to or take away from the words written in the Bible (Rev. 22:18-19). We stand on truth by studying what the Lord and His disciples taught, and by saying only what the Bible says.

Someone might ask, "Why is important for us to stand in truth?" It is important because God has told us to! In 1 Kings 22:2 we are told not to turn to the right hand or to the left. Instead, we must do only what God has said. As Mary said of Christ, "Whatever He says to you, do it." God created us. We did not create Him. He is our Creator (Gen. 1:1). He is the Father of our spirits (Heb. 12:9). He is the One to Whom, on the Day of Judgment, we will give an account (Jn. 12:48; Rev. 20:12-15). Why should we stand in the truth? We must do it because God has told us to do so. He is our Creator, and we must be submissive to Him. We must do His will.

We also need to stand in the truth because doing so is the only way we can know we are saved. How can a person be sure that he is saved? A feeling is not enough. There were people in the Bible who had feelings, but they were wrong. In Acts 23:1 Paul said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Did that mean that in Acts 7 when Saul (who would become Paul) was holding the coats of those who stoned Stephen, he felt it was right? Yes, he did. Was he right? Absolutely not! He was wrong. The only way we can know we are saved is by standing in the truth. Look at the beautiful words of 1 John 5:13 and the comfort they give us: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." Did John say that he wrote what he did so we could "think" or "feel" or "have an idea" that we are saved? No. John said, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may

know that you have eternal life.” Standing in the truth is about **knowing** that we are right with God. Jesus said, “You shall **know** the truth, and the truth **will** make you free.” The equation is that if we know the truth, then we can know that we are free and that we are right with God. God has not left us without exact details and teaching on how to be right with Him. Jesus said in John 4:24 in regard to worship, “God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.” If we must worship correctly, then there must be a place where we can find out how to do that. That “place” is the Word of God. Ephesians 5:17 tells us, “Do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Why must we stand in the truth? Simply put, it is because God is in control, because He told us to do so, and because that is the only way we can know that we are right with God and are saved.

If we stand in the truth found within the Bible because we want to be sure that we are right with God, what would we teach? Here are some things we would teach. We would teach, for example, the unique and distinctive identify of the Lord’s church. The Lord did not create a religious group on every street corner. He did not create 500, 600, or 3,000 different groups. The Lord’s church is unique and distinct from every other group that exists today. How do we know that? Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi and asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” They said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Jesus then asked “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him,

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:13-18).

What did Jesus promise to build? Did He promise to build a multitude of religious groups on a multitude of religious rocks to match everyone’s feelings or ideas? Not at all! He said, “I will build My church.” What makes the church of the Lord unique and distinct? It is built upon and by Jesus Christ. Jesus has to be the foundation. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 we read, “No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” What does that passage teach us? It teaches that Jesus must be the foundation. Jesus cannot be the foundation if we base what we believe on men’s teachings and things that are not in the Scriptures. Jesus Himself said that the body is the church. God “put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body” (Eph. 1:22-23). The church is the body. How many churches do we find in Scripture? How many bodies are there? If we look at Ephesians 4:4 we read that there is “one body.” If the church is the body, and if there is only one body, how many churches are there? In 1 Corinthians 12:13 we are taught, “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” God has never been pleased with religious division. Paul said, “I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). Jesus prayed that His disciples would all “be one” (Jn. 17:20-21). How can it be the case that all the different religious groups are right when they do not follow God’s teachings, when they do not wear the name of the Lord or exhibit the distinct characteristics of His church, and when they do not follow the Bible? If we are going to stand in the truth, then we must understand the unique identify of the Lord’s church.

Also, if we stand in the truth, we will teach the absolute and final authority of the Scriptures. In speaking to people about religious matters (and especially relating to authority), we can come up with many different views and ideas. Some will say that the apostolic fathers (after the writing of the New Testament) gave us some ideas. Some say that we have tradi-

tions that have been passed down. Others say that such things as art and history that have come down to us are authoritative. But that is not what the Bible says. It makes it abundantly clear that there is one and only one ultimate source of authority. That is the Scriptures. Jesus has the final say. In Matthew 28:18-19 Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations." Who has "all authority"? Jesus does? Can you have more than "all"? Absolutely not! If Jesus has "all authority," if He is still reigning from the right hand of God in Heaven (Heb. 1:4), if He is still "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16), then that does not leave us any authority on our own. Colossians 3:17 says, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." What does it mean to do "all" in the name of the Lord Jesus? Does it mean that we can just throw our hands in the air and say, "in Jesus' name," and we then will be right with God? Acts 4:7 provides a divine commentary on understanding what it means to do everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Peter and John were asked about the name (or authority) by which they had done the things they had done. One's name is the authority. If a policeman says, "Stop in the name of the law," that means that he has the authority to tell you to stop. Jesus has told us that we must do everything "by His name," which means "by His authority." In 1 Corinthians 4:6 the Bible teaches us that we are "not to go beyond that which is written." Where is the outer barrier for authority? It is on one side of the Scripture and on the other side. Only in between those two areas can we find our authority today. If we cannot go beyond what is written, then we cannot go outside the pages of the Bible for our authority. If we do, we will not be right with God. The Proverbs writer said, "Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6). We do not have the right to add to God's Word something that we want or "feel is right." We do not have the right to take away from God's Word. "If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:19).

There is a good example in Scripture of two men who did not realize the importance of God's authority. In Leviticus 10:1-2 the Scripture tells us that Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his censer, "put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." What did these two men do wrong? They took unauthorized ("profane") fire, "which God had not commanded." That is a wake-up call. If we do not want to be like Nadab and Abihu, we need to make sure that we do only what is commanded and what is authorized. That is what it means to stand in the truth.

Another practical principle about standing in truth is that in our worship we must worship God only in the manner in which He has authorized us to worship Him. Instrumental music is not authorized by God. Remember that we live under the New Testament. In John 12:48 Jesus said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." When we stand before God, we will not be judged by the words of Moses, David, Noah, or anyone else under the Old Law. We will be judged by the words of Christ because we are living under the New Testament. Then what does the New Testament say about the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship? God has not authorized such instruments. What God has not commanded, we must not do. Colossians 3:16 helps us with this idea. What does God want in regard to music in worship? We are told, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." We are to teach, admonish, and sing with grace in our hearts. We are to "make melody in our hearts" (Eph. 5:19). Are we to do that with an organ, a piano, a drum set, or a guitar? No. God said, "Make melody in your

hearts.” We worship God in spirit and in truth by doing what 1 Corinthians 14:15 says: “I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.” That is what God has told us to do today. God does not want us to do things that are not right. We understand this principle in every other area of our lives. Yet when it comes to the Bible, we can’t seem to understand it. Let me illustrate. Suppose you order a pizza. You call the local pizza shop and say, “I would like to order a large pizza with pepperoni and black olives.” You give them your address, and in about 30 minutes the doorbell rings. The pizza is hot and warm, and it smells good. You take it inside, open it up, look at it, and see that it has pepperoni and black olives, along with pineapple and anchovies. You look at the fellow and say, “I told you I wanted pepperoni and black olives. I didn’t tell you I wanted these other things.” How would you respond if the fellow said, “Well, you didn’t tell us **not** to”? Would you pay for the pizza and be happy with it? The very fact that you specified what you wanted excluded everything else. When God said, “Sing and make melody in your hearts,” He did not have to say, “Don’t play an organ. Don’t play a piano. Don’t play a guitar.” When God tells us what He wants, that is all He wants. We understand that in other areas of our lives. We need to apply it to the teaching of Scripture.

Another area in which we must stand in the truth is understanding that there can be no such thing as “unity in diversity.” We live in a world where people say, “You’re going your way, and I’m going my way, but we’re all going to the same place.” Is that true? Are we all taking different roads to the same place? That is not what the Scriptures say. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus said,

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Amos asked, “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Man cannot walk hand in hand with God if he does not follow God’s principles. How did Christians do it in the first century? Acts 2:42 tells us, “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” They did what the inspired men of God did. Oh, how we need to learn that lesson today. God does not want “unity in diversity.” He wants “unity in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). We need to realize that God desires unity. “How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1). In John 17:20-21 Jesus prayed that His disciples would “all be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” God does not want men to be divided into various religious groups. God wants us to come to the Bible, speak the same thing, be of the same mind, and do what He says.

Something else we will teach if we stand in truth is the absolute essentiality of baptism—meaning that a person cannot be saved one second before he is baptized. Do the Scriptures teach that? Most people in the religious world do not. But does the Bible teach that baptism is absolutely essential to salvation? Yes. The Bible makes it abundantly clear. When Peter was asked by the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, “Men and brethren, what must we do?,” he told them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37-38). If baptism is “for the remission of sins,” and if we cannot live with God unless our sins are removed, then we cannot be saved before baptism. In Acts 22:16 Saul was told, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Look at how clear Jesus made it in Mark 16:16 when He said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Must a person believe and be baptized in order to

be saved? That is exactly what Jesus said. Both requirements must be met prior to salvation. Galatians 3:27 teaches us that when we are baptized, we clothe ourselves with Christ and are “baptized into Christ.” Why is that important? It is important because “all spiritual blessings are in Christ” (Eph. 1:3) and salvation is “in Christ” (2 Tim. 2:10-12). If we are baptized “into Christ,” then we cannot have all spiritual blessings or salvation one second before.

Are you standing in the truth today? Are you sure that you are right with God? Have you obeyed God’s plan of salvation? Are you a part of the unique and distinct church of which you read in the Bible?

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “STANDING IN TRUTH”

1. What did the writer of Proverbs mean when he said, “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23)?
2. According to Ephesians 4:15, how are we to speak the truth?
3. What important piece of information did Jesus provide in John 8:32 about standing in truth?
4. The text of 2 Timothy 2:15 provides an important clue about what every Christian should do in order to stand in truth. What is that clue?
5. What did the Bereans do in Acts 17:11 that resulted in their receiving an apostolic commendation?
6. What important concept is found in Ezra 7:10 that we should imitate today?
7. What important message is found in Ephesians 5:17 that we today need to learn and put into practice?
8. According to 2 Peter 1:3, what do we have in the Bible that can prepare us for standing in truth?
9. According to 1 John 5:13, what benefit can we gain from standing in truth?
10. What important truth about “the body” and “the church” can one learn by comparing Ephesians 1:21-23 and Ephesians 4:4?
11. According to passages such as Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Ephesians 4:4, how many churches did Christ establish?
12. What important principle is taught in the text of 1 Corinthians 3:11 that relates to standing in truth?
13. According to John 12:48, where is the truth found that will judge us on the Day of Judgment?
14. What does John 4:24 mean when it says that we are to worship God “in spirit **and in truth**”?
15. What important concept regarding truth is contained in 1 Corinthians 4:6?
16. What does Colossians 3:17 mean when it says, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord”?
17. According to Matthew 28:18-19, who has “all authority” in matters of religion?
18. What do Mark 16:15 and 1 Peter 3:21 teach regarding how a person is saved?