

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.

If we are going to please God today, we must be committed to standing in the truth. We must stand in the truth in such a way that we are willing to hold fast to that which is good. We must be willing to “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21). We must be people who remain firmly committed to God’s Word—moving neither to the right nor to the left. What does it really mean to “stand in the truth”? I would like to allay any misconceptions by noting first what it does **not** mean to stand in the truth. Please understand that as we talk about standing in the truth, we are talking about holding to the Word of God. But this does not mean that we can be ugly or unkind in our presentation of what God said. Yes, Jude 3 does teach us that we should “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” The Bible, the faith that we have in God and His Word, and God’s plan of salvation are all that we have, and we must stand firm in such things. We must valiantly stand up for the truth. But that does not mean that we can be ugly or unkind as we say what God has said. Ephesians 5:11 says that we are to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” Yes, we are to expose error. And yes, we must say what is right according to the Word of God. But we must speak the truth in a loving and kind way.

I want us to think about how Christians should speak the Truth. Ephesians 4:15 offers a valid principle in this regard. It points out that Christians are to “speak the truth in love.” Yes, we must say what God said. There is no doubt about that. We are to “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11), but when we do, we are to speak out of love for people’s souls. So, as we speak about standing in the truth, please know that our only motive in what we say is love for your soul so that you can go to Heaven and spend eternity with almighty God. It has been properly said, “No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” You could know the Bible from front to back—every verse, every passage, and every word. But until people see in your life and in your speech how much you care, they will not care how much you know. It amazes me how the common people listened to Jesus. He had been with these people day in and day out. He had healed their children. He had fed them on different occasions. And He had expressed compassion for them. It is little wonder, then, that Mark 12:37 records that “the common people heard Him gladly.” Jesus never wavered in speaking the truth. In fact, He spoke some very difficult things—things that caused the Jews to want to kill Him. Yet the common people heard Him gladly because they knew how much He cared.

If we do speak the truth, it does not mean that we are the only committed religious people around. There are any number of people who are sincere, committed, and zealous. But it is important to remember that there is a big difference between “being committed” and “being committed **and** being right with God.” Romans 10:2 teaches us that there are people who have a zeal for God, but “not according to knowledge.” We today need to be people who have both a zeal for God and a knowledge of His Word. Romans 6:17 speaks of people who obeyed the truth and who, as a result, came out of the world and into the Gos-

pel. All of us have, at one time or another, found ourselves in need of God's mercy and grace. Ephesians 2:4 makes it clear that all of us have lived a life of sin. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul spoke of people who had once been adulterers, idolaters, homosexuals, sodomites, etc. But they had been washed, and had come out of their sin. So yes, there are other zealous people. But we need to be sure that we are zealous for the cause of Christ.

As we think about our subject today, we need to ask, "What does it really mean to 'stand in the truth'?" How do we today stand in the truth of God's Word? If we want to be committed to the cause of Christ and to that which is right, what would we have to do? First, we would have to study the Bible to know what the Lord and His apostles taught. There is no way to stand in the truth without knowing what Jesus and His disciples taught and preached. This requires that we learn the Bible for ourselves. I am afraid that many people in the religious world today have been told what to believe or have heard from a friend, relative, or religious leader what they are "supposed" to believe—instead of coming to the Bible to find out what they should believe. In order to stand in the truth, a person must study God's Word personally to know what is right. Paul told Timothy, "Study to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). As Paul was speaking to this young preacher, he could have said, "I will give you my outlines and you just preach those." But he did not say that. Instead, he told Timothy to study the Word of God for himself and then to rightly divide it and to preach it to others. In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul told Timothy, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."

There is a passage that often comes to mind as we think about our personal responsibility to study the Bible. It is Acts 17:11. I want us to turn our attention to this passage for just a moment. In speaking of the Bereans, Paul said "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." Here we find Paul speaking of the fact that someone taught the Bereans something. They heard the message with a ready mind, but they did not automatically "buy into it." Instead, they basically said, "We have heard what you said. We've made a few notes. We've listened to your message. Now we are going to compare what you have said to the Word of God to see if what you are saying is true to God's will." This is what it means to "stand in the truth." It means that we go to the Source—the Bible—to see if what we are being taught is right. Proverbs 15:28 says, "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer." Peter commanded, "Be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). How can we **be** ready to give an answer without first **getting** ready by studying the Bible to know what God has said? Do you know why God's people, the Israelites, were once destroyed? Hosea 4:6 says that they were destroyed "for a lack of knowledge." So, we first must **know** what Jesus and His disciples taught. Then we must **say** what Jesus and His disciples said. As we study and learn from the Bible, then we must put into practice in our lives what we learn. Afterwards, we must say what the Lord and His disciples said. This is an important principle that is set forth in Jeremiah 37:17. In this context, Jeremiah was asked by an evil king, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Jeremiah told him, "Yes, there is, but you are not going to like it." And the king did not like it! But the important point is that Jeremiah knew it—and was willing to say what God had already said. I am reminded of Romans 4:3 where Paul asked, "What does the Scripture say?" Today, we need to be people who are committed to the cause of Christ, who want to do what is right, and who are willing to follow the Bible. Peter wrote, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us" (2 Pet. 1:3). We have everything we need in the Bible, but we must know it so that we can say what God has already said. Paul told Timothy that the Bible should be all we need in

religious matters because it is the inspired Word of God. Paul said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work: (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Holy men of God did not "interpret" what God said. Rather, they spoke what they were told as they were moved by God's Holy Spirit. According to 2 Peter 1:19-21, we need to say what the Bible says because it is the only truth that can save our souls. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Pilate asked, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38). Today we have the answer to that question. In John 17:17, Jesus said, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." What is truth in religious matters? What is the truth that sets us free? It is the Word of God. I love the words of Psalm 119:160. The psalmist wrote, "The entirety of Your word is truth." God's Word is the only truth we have in matters of religion, and we must be sure that we say what God has said. It is a very serious matter to go beyond what God has said. According to 1 Corinthians 4:6, we are not to even think "beyond that which is written." The Bible is to be our guide in all of our thoughts on religious matters. What God has said is to be what we think, and we are not to go beyond that. Revelation 22:18-19 makes it clear that there is a great danger in doing or saying anything more than what God has said. We are not to add to, or take from, God's Word—lest the woes found within that Word fall upon us. So, we must study the Scriptures and say only those things that the Lord and His apostle taught us to say.

However, as we discuss standing in the truth, we also need to ask, "Why is it important for us to stand in truth and do only those things that God has taught me to do?" God has told us what to do, and we must not do anything that God has not told us to do. There is a good example of this in 2 Kings 22:8 where we read, "Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.'" From the king all the way down to the priests and the people, they began to tear their garments and rend their hearts. They then decided that they were going to do whatever God had commanded them to do. We must continue to stand in the truth because, simply put, God has told us to! In Acts 27 we find Paul on a ship in the midst of a storm. The men are wondering if they are going to survive. In verse 25, Paul says to the men, "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me." We can have the same comfort today. When we stand in the truth, we do so because God has told us to, and we can know that we are right with God. When my daughter Hannah was young, she used to sing a song that she had learned in Bible class—"Jesus loves me, this I know." She seemed to "get stuck" on just those two phrases. My wife and I grew tired of hearing her sing only those two phrases, so we would ask her, "Hannah, how do you know that Jesus loves you?" Do you remember what the rest of that song says? Hannah looked at me as if I should already have known the answer to my own question. Then she stuck her finger out and said, "Bible told us so!" Out of the mouths of babes we can learn important lessons. Why must we continue to stand in truth? It is because "the Bible told us so!" God, through His Word, has told us that this is what we need to do. And if there were no other reasons, wouldn't this one be enough? God has told us to stand in the truth, and that is exactly what we must do.

But there also is another reason why we must continue to stand in the truth. The only way we can know we are saved is by standing in the truth of God's Word. That is the only way that we can know that we are right with God. I would like to turn our attention to 1 John 5:13—a passage that makes this very point. John wrote, "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." How can we know that we have eternal life? We can know through the Word of God. If we do not stand in the truth, there is no way that we can know if we are saved. If we follow what some man says, what some religious leader says, or what some book says,

we cannot be sure that we are right with God. But if we follow the Bible alone, here is what is so encouraging. We can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that we are right with God and that we are going to Heaven. Did you know that if you take the Bible and it alone, and do exactly what it says, it is impossible for you **not** to go to Heaven? Think about that for a moment. If you will take the Bible, read it, study it, and do what it says with an unbiased heart, you can know that you are right with God and that will go to Heaven. If you add the thinking of other people—such as that from current religious leaders or theologians of the past—you cannot know for sure that you are right with God. You must do only what the Bible says to do. Remember Jesus' statement, "You can know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Paul said in Philippians 4:9, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." So why is it important that we stand in truth? God has told us to, and it is the only way we can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that we are right with God.

But what would we teach if we are determined to stand in the truth of God's Word? If we are going to say what the Bible says and do what the Bible teaches us to do, what exactly would we teach? What lessons would we learn? What principles would we say are valid for us to live by today? We need to understand first and foremost that if we intend to say what God says, and if we are going to stand in truth, then we would teach the unique identity of the Lord's church—a principle that is taught in 1 Corinthians 3:11. Paul wrote, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." One of the principles that we would teach today, and that we would beg people to accept, is that the Lord's church is unique. It is distinctive. It is not "one among many" that people can accept as approved by God. We must not fall prey to the idea that we can "accept the church of our choice" and then we will still be all right in God's sight. In Matthew 16:13-18, Jesus had a discussion with His disciples about this very point.

"'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and 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.'"

Upon what "rock" was Christ going to build His church? It was upon the fact that He is the Son of God. Jesus said, "I will build **My** church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Whose church is it? Is it some religious leader's of today? Is it some theologian's from centuries past? Is it a church that is named after some wonderful act of grace or mercy that we find in the Bible? No, Jesus said, "I will build **My** church." We need to remember that the church is unique and distinctive. It belongs to Jesus, and He is the only foundation upon which it can be built. We need to realize that Jesus is the Head of the church. In our modern world, there are many who think that there are different heads of different religious groups. There is a head for this group, and a head for that group. But that is not the case with the New Testament church. Ephesians 1:21-23 says that Jesus is "the Head of the church, which is His body." The church is Christ's body, and He is still its Head. He is still the King of the kingdom, and we must submit to Him in every way. We need to realize that the church is unique because there is only one church found in the pages of the Bible. Ephesians 4:4 says that the church is the body. Do you remember what Ephesians 1:21-23 says the body was? Christ is the Head of the church, which is His body. "The church" and "the body" are synonyms. Paul said that there is but one

body. If the church is the body, and if there is only one body, then how many churches did Jesus build? Jesus said, "I will build my **church**." He built only one. It belongs to Him. It is unique and distinctive, and it follows the will of almighty God. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." So what do we teach today? We teach the unique and distinctive nature of the Lord's church.

As we stand in the truth, we also will teach the authority of the Scriptures. We absolutely **must** hold to the authority of the Scriptures. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." He then told His disciples to go and preach the Word. The principle that we need to realize and live out in our lives is that **all** authority has been given to Christ. It is in the Bible that Jesus gave us the authority regarding what we are to do, and we must not go beyond that. Colossians 3:17 is a passage that teaches us the principle of authority. "And 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 something "in someone's name"? Suppose a policeman says to you, "Stop in the name of the law." What does that mean? It means "by the authority vested in him as a representative of the law." In Acts 4:7, Peter and John were asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" When we do something in the name of Christ, it means that we have His authority to do it. Jesus has told us to do it. Remember 1 Corinthians 4:6? We are not to "think beyond what is written." We are not to add to or take away from the Word of God (Rev. 22:18-19). Let me remind you of a passage in the Old Testament that teaches us this principle. In Leviticus 10:1-2, we find the example of Nadab and Abihu—two young priests who were offering a sacrifice as part of their service to God. The Bible tells us that they authorized "profane" (unauthorized) fire that God had not commanded. As a result, fire fell from Heaven and killed those two young men. They did two things wrong. First, they offered something profane to God. Second, God had not commanded that they do what they did. Today, the same principle applies to us. We must do only that for which we have a "thus saith the Lord."

Another principle that we would teach if we want to stand in the truth is that instrumental music in worship is not authorized by God. As we think about this principle, we need to consider what Paul said in Colossians 3:16 when he wrote, "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." How are Christians to worship God in song in the New Testament church? Remember, of course, that we no longer live under the Old Testament. According to Ephesians 2:14, Jesus nailed the Old Law to the cross. Hebrews 8:13 tells us that the Old Law was ready to vanish away. It was growing old, even at the time of the writing of the Book of Hebrews. We today live under the New Testament. And everything the New Testament says about worship in the church today is something that is done without the use of instrumental music. We sing one to another. We make melody in our hearts to God. We teach and admonish one another as we do these things. There are so many passages that teach us this principle. Romans 15:9 says that we are to sing praises to God's name. Hebrews 2:12 tells us that we are to glorify Him in song in the assembly. In Acts 16:25, Paul and Silas are in prison where they are singing psalms and hymns to God, and the prisoners are listening to them. James 5:13 says, "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms." Everything the New Testament has to say about our singing is a cappella (that is, without the accompaniment of an instrument). That is all that God says we are to do, and we must not go beyond that. The text of 1 Corinthians says, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding." That is how we sing today. We engage our minds, and we do only those things that God has authorized. Someone might say, "Well, God didn't say that we couldn't." That is not how Christians operate. We do not say, "We will do this because God did not say we couldn't." Rather,

we do only that which God authorizes. This is the way people operate in their everyday lives. Say you have a child, and you give him \$5 to go to the grocery store for a loaf of bread that should cost around \$2. When he comes back, he has only about thirty cents in change. You ask, "Where is the rest of the change?" He says, "Well, dad, I bought myself some candy and a soda pop." You then look at him and say, "I didn't tell you that you could do that." What would you say if he looked back at you and said, "Well, you didn't say not to"? We do not operate that way. What we say is all that we want. The same principle is true with God. When He tells us to sing to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, that is all He wants us to do. So, if we want to stand in the truth, we will teach that in the New Testament, Christians sang a cappella in their worship.

We also would teach that there cannot be "unity in diversity." In Amos 3:3, an important question is asked: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" The real question is, "Can men walk together with each other if they do not even agree on the basic principles?" The Bible says in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Jesus prayed for unity in John 17:20-21 when He said, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may 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." How do we achieve unity? Can it be found in diversity? Absolutely not! The Bible says that we are to achieve "the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). The only way we will ever attain true unity is when we come to the Bible and say—regardless of what we have heard or been taught—that we are going to accept and obey God's Word. It does not matter who likes it or who does not like it. We are going to live according to God's Word and His will.

Another principle we would teach if we want to stand in truth is the necessity of baptism in the plan of salvation. Listen to the words of Christ in Mark 16:16. Jesus clearly said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. As you think about the necessity of baptism, it is difficult to get around the words of Jesus. Christ said that there are two requirements that, when met, produce the end result of salvation. We cannot "earn" our salvation. But there are two things that we must do. We must believe, and we must be baptized to be saved. Jesus said that if we do not believe, then we will be condemned. He did not say that belief is not essential. He said that it is. Think about the words of Acts 2:38, which is such a clear response to the people on the Day of Pentecost who cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The answer was, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." In Acts 22:16, Saul (who later would become the apostle Paul) was told, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Thus, we must teach the necessity of baptism.

Are you standing in the truth? Have you obeyed the Gospel? Are you a child of God? If not, you can become one today. Believe that Jesus is God's Son. Believe so strongly that you are willing to repent of your sins and change your life. Be willing to confess Christ as your Savior. And yes, be willing to obey the Gospel by baptized. Peter said, "Baptism does also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). Remember that by standing in the truth, you can know that you are right with God. We plead with you today to come to the Bible, do what it says, and live your life according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “STANDING IN TRUTH”

1. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:21 admonish us to do in order to “stand in truth”?
2. What does Ephesians 5:11 command Christians to do as one part of their effort to stand in truth?
3. According to Ephesians 4:15, how are we to speak the truth?
4. In Romans 10:2, Paul discussed two things that it is important to have if we want to stand in truth. What are those two things?
5. 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?
6. What did the Bereans do in Acts 17:11 that resulted in their receiving an apostolic commendation?
7. According to 2 Peter 1:3, what do we have in the Bible that can prepare us for standing in truth?
8. In Acts 27:25, there is an important piece of information aimed at helping us understand why we should stand in truth. What is it?
9. According to 1 John 5:13, what benefit can we gain from standing in truth?
10. What important piece of information did Jesus provide in John 8:32 about standing in truth?
11. According to Ephesians 1:21-23, who is the Head of the church?
12. What important principle is taught in the text of 1 Corinthians 3:11 that relates to standing in truth?
13. What important truth about “the body” and “the church” can one learn by comparing Ephesians 1:21-23 and Ephesians 4:4?
14. According to passages such as Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Ephesians 4:4, how many churches did Christ establish?
15. If we stand in truth, we will teach about the uniqueness of Christ’s church, but we also will teach something about the Bible. What is that “something”?
16. What does “standing in truth” mean we will teach regarding the type of music used in worship to God?
17. What important question is asked in Amos 3:3 that relates to standing in truth?
18. What do Mark 16:15 and 1 Peter 3:21 teach regarding how a person is saved?