

More Faulty Assumptions

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[0 : 00] Please, the book of Proverbs in chapter 12. I think it's just after Ecclesiastes and Isaiah there.

Proverbs chapter 12, and we'll be looking at verses 17 through 22.

He who speaks truth tells what is right, but a false witness deceit.

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrust of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment.

Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy. No harm befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble.

[1 : 15] Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.

Thank you, Gary. And hearing that ringing cell phone reminds me of one of my most embarrassing moments.

I was at a funeral home prepared to speak at this funeral, and it just so happened it was someone who was not from grace anyway.

So that's just as well. And as I sat there prepared to take the podium and mentally going over in my mind some of the things I planned to say, I made a mental note to myself.

I need to remind the folks when the service starts that that would be a good time to turn off their cell phone. And by the way, I need to remind myself to turn mine off too.

[2 : 23] And just then the funeral director walked up to me and started the conversation just a couple of minutes before the service was to start. And I talked with him, and then he motioned me to come to the pulpit.

So I went up, and I was about two minutes into my message. And my phone went off. And I died a thousand deaths.

And I apologized and reached down in my shirt pocket and picked it up and hit the off button. But I didn't hold it down long enough. Put it back in my pocket.

And about three minutes later, it went off again. Oh, my, my. So fortunately, it was a very unusual kind of service.

And I helped to make it unusual too. But the folks had a really good attitude. And it was an unusual kind of an occasion.

[3 : 26] But they were very accommodating, very understanding, and they got a chuckle out of it. So, yeah. But I tried to remind myself in the future. So whoever's phone that was, you had my deepest sympathy, but I understand entirely.

And all is forgiven. Okay. So. Having been here for as long as I have, I think it's very easy for me or anyone in a situation like this to start taking some things for granted, just assuming certain things.

And I kind of felt myself checking myself about that. You know what happens when you assume.

And we've been through that before.

And this series that we are engaged in has to do with doctrine that is frequently based upon faulty assumptions. People assume certain things are true and certain interpretations of the Bible are true and accurate.

And they begin promoting those. And because they are often people in positions of authority and respect and often better educated than the average person.

[4 : 44] Their findings and what they say about them just becomes kind of automatically accepted. And the next thing you know, it finds its way into doctrinal statements and expressions of faith.

And people just kind of log on to it and believe it because so-and-so took that position. And it's very easy to do. But the danger of faulty assumptions is that faulty assumptions often become ingrained as doctrine.

And then when people appropriate something as doctrinally true, if they are serious about it, the most logical thing for them is to begin to act upon what they believe to be true.

After all, why shouldn't you? Why wouldn't you? But if the assumption was faulty and the doctrine is incorrect, then the practice is going to be incorrect.

Then the belief system is going to be incorrect. And that means that puts a very, very high premium on what is true and what is not.

[5 : 58] As opposed to what we assume to be true, but often turns out to be untrue. So I ask myself, if someone walked into this auditorium on an ordinary Sunday morning, not really all that familiar with Grace Bible Church or what we are about or why we are here, and not all that familiar with Christianity.

But they're just wandering around searching for something they know not what. And they make their way through our doors and they sit there in one of the chairs. Logical question to ask that we should all ask ourselves right now.

Why are we here right now? What is this all about? What is this present scene to do with life and living?

Some questions I'd like to ask. Is this just a weekly tradition that we go through? Is that all this is?

And who is this man behind the pulpit that we call a pastor?

And what's he talking about anyway? Does he even know what he's talking about? And what is this book that he holds up? Reads from and says, we ought to believe it.

[7 : 29] And why should we? Just because he says so? Or just because the book says so? And if this book is so important, why doesn't everyone read it and believe it?

These are all legitimate questions deserving of thoughtful, serious answers. But they're the kind of questions that souls such as ours that just kind of assume things don't even stop to ask.

We just, it's just not, I guess you'd say it's not normal to try to put yourself in someone else's position and ask those questions. But maybe it ought to be. We are here largely because the world is real.

And such a thing as reality actually exists. Reality and truth are partners. And they feed on each other.

What is real is true. And what is true is real. When truth claims are made about what is real, but it is not real at all, it is a lie.

[8 : 45] Separating what is real and true from what is not real and true. From what is not real and true. Is our greatest human responsibility. Now that's quite a statement.

But I really mean it. And I want it to sink in. Separating what is real and true from what is not real and true.

Is our greatest human responsibility. We are possessed with a thing called reason and logic to help us.

But we know human logic can be seriously flawed. And as regards what is purported to be true, who says so, who or what source says that this is our greatest human responsibility.

Subject of truth is precious, priceless. Our entire jurisprudence system of law courts throughout the world is predicated upon truth and untruth able to be separated.

[10 : 14] Brett Kavanaugh and Senate confirmation to the Supreme Court came very close to not happening. Why?

All because of the difficulty of arriving at truth. All we had to go on was the testimony of those making truth claims.

Claims which could not be true and also untrue. the credibility of those offering testimony became paramount.

And there were editorials and opinions given on all the networks as to why so-and-so was to be believed or why so-and-so was not to be believed. And the nation was kind of in a grip of this thing for several days as it dragged on.

one who made certain claims they insisted were true has now, I understand, admitted to making it all up.

[11 : 39] Wow. Her story of truth claims did not correspond to reality. But still, many were inclined to believe it.

Sometimes it is easy for us to accept something as true because we want it to be true. We want to believe it.

And we may reject something as being true for the same reason. We don't want that to be true. Do you realize, and I've given this a lot of thought, do you realize how many obstacles there are to the discovery of truth?

First of all, there are those who believe that the knowledge of truth is unknowable. That was Pontius Pilate's position when Jesus told him that he came to bear witness of the truth.

And Pilate sarcastically responded with, truth. What is truth? As if to say, you don't know what truth is, and I don't know what truth is, and nobody knows what truth is because it can't be known.

[13:10] So, there are those who believe that it is non-existent. That's certainly an obstacle to truth. And there is emotional objection against acceptance, and I've already mentioned that.

We don't want it to be true because we don't like the implications or how that's going to play out. So, we reject it up front as being true.

And then, of course, there is the obstacle of arrogance. Arrogance, I define as ignorance on steroids.

Arrogance says, I already know the truth, and I already know all the truth that matters. Living in a world where there's something new to be learned every day, it's hard to imagine that anybody can have that attitude.

But we all know that it certainly is possible. And then, item number four, another obstacle to the discovery of truth, is that we have, even though we have reason and logic given to us by God, our Creator, our reason and our logic were severely injured in the fall.

[14:30] And I really hope you get a firm handle on this because it is so very, very important. When our first parents fell, and that's generally the term that is assigned to the principle, to the concept of the creatures volitionally disobeying the Creator, the fall.

It's referred to as the fall. And it is the fall of humanity. And we didn't fall up, we fell down. That's the only way you can fall in a world where there's gravity.

We fell down. And it wasn't merely the human body that fell and took on an added dimension that God didn't put in it when he created it, and we call that thing sin.

But the injection of that sin principle into the human psyche and into the human physical body started a process called dying.

dying. And the dynamic of dying got underway. And in the case of our first parents, it was realized immediately that a death had occurred in the relationship between the creature and the Creator because as a result of their offense and their disobedience, they entailed guilt.

[16:11] And guilt is emotional pain that is produced from the knowledge that we have violated a standard. And it creates an unsettledness within us emotionally and psychologically.

And it tends to produce fear. Guilt produces fear because there is the threat of being discovered and there is the threat of being punished as a result of it.

And I think it's perfectly logical that our first parents hid from God. Apparently, they had an amiable greeting rather frequently.

but this time when God came in the cool of the day to walk with Adam or with Eve, they hid because of their nakedness.

They had taken on a dimension that God did not create in them. They became something other than what God created them to be.

[17:20] and as we have often pointed out, and the reason I do this, I know that it's repetitious, but repetition is the mother of learning, and I want certain things to be embedded in your brain, not so that you'll remember them, but so you can't forget them.

And one of them is a principal consequence of the fall and of being born into a fallen humanity, like we all are, is that we become automatically self-absorbed and self-centered.

That's part of the human condition. And as we pointed out before, before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, God was their focus.

They centered everything upon Him. And when they rejected His authority, their focus changed from God to self, became an inward focus.

And as a result, self-satisfaction and self-pleasing and self-serving became the order of the day for all of us.

[18:43] No exceptions. And for the unenlightened soul who may protest and say, speak for yourself, preacher, you don't know me because I don't have a selfish bone in my body.

And to you, I would say you are not only self-centered, you are self-deceived. Because you do. You just have more efficient ways of covering it up. And you know who really needs that?

Mothers. If anybody ever needed to submerge their self-centeredness, it's a mother who just pours out herself for her offspring.

But make no mistake about it, even our dear, sainted mothers are self-centered. We all are. It's a virus. It's a terminal disease, a spiritual virus that we are all connected with.

and it's just part of this. This is why the world is the way it is. Understand that? This is why the world is the way it is. When I am self-serving and you are self-serving, but there's only one item, then the contest begins, who's going to get it?

[20 : 00] Who's going to prevail? Who's going to win? And that's the world we live in. And this is one of the things, this is one of the dynamics that Jesus Christ really alters when he comes into a life that enables us to get back, if you will, to that original position where our focus becomes God more than it becomes us.

But we still have that potential for the us-ness, and that's because we are still dealing with the flesh. Even as a regenerated human being, we still have the flesh.

This is what makes it possible for someone who is truly regenerated, heaven is their home, they know Christ is their Savior, and they can still do really ugly things that are not becoming of any believer, but we are all capable of that.

so that possibility exists, even though in our present state of this unglorified body, we have the Spirit of God who indwells us, and Paul said, as he wrote to the Galatians, that God has made a provision for you, and if you walk, if you conduct your life, if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

And I think the obvious is quite telling that if you do not walk in the Spirit, you will walk in the flesh.

And you've heard me say before that probably the greatest asset that God has on this planet is a believer in Jesus Christ who is walking in the Spirit.

[21 : 56] Because the natural produce of that life will be love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, gentleness, meekness, faith, temperance, etc.

All of those things that are produced by the Spirit of God. And if you look in the same chapter, there is an ugly litany of the deeds of the flesh right above that.

And interestingly enough, the deeds of the flesh double the fruit of the Spirit. That's an interesting observation.

So a believer in Christ still has the option of walking in the flesh. And even as a believer who is walking in the Spirit is God's greatest asset, probably God's greatest liability is a Christian professing so who walks in the flesh.

In the first place, you can't hardly tell them from an unbeliever because their value system seems to be pretty much the same. You can't really tell the difference. So there is that warped intellect from the fall and there is satanic blindness that we've examined before in 2 Corinthians 4 where the apostle tells us that Satan is the God of this age.

[23 : 23] He is calling the shots on the planet. And when Jesus confronted him in the 40 days of wilderness temptation, Satan actually offered him the planet.

All of these kingdoms of the world, the whole shebang, I'll give you if you fall down and worship me. Now some think that it was an illegitimate offer, but I think it was a fully legitimate offer that it belonged to Satan.

He is the God of this age and he had it to offer. He had it to offer legitimately and of course our Lord was not interested in accepting it that way because he full well knew that the time was going to come when it would be his and he would take it, not because Satan would give it to him, but because he would take it from him.

And that will be realized in Revelation 19. And there is an objection to reaching the truth or an obstacle to reaching the truth because of who has accepted it.

people. I've heard people say things like, well, so and so lives just two doors down from me and they are in church every Sunday and they claim to be this wonderful Christian family and those people are the biggest hypocrites in the whole block.

[24 : 54] I wouldn't want to be anything like them. I hate those people. That's the Christians walking in the flesh. Not exactly a very good example. And you know something? There are Christians who can give off the signals of really knowing the Lord and at the same time they have a lifestyle and an attitude that is completely contrary to everything that's Christianity.

And they are a bad advertisement for the gospel. They are the people that I was talking about. that I said it's God's greatest liability, not an asset, is Christians who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ and then walk in the flesh.

And I've often wondered what kind of an impact would we make on the world if everyone who is a true believer got with the program and started walking in the spirit as opposed to the flesh.

What kind of an impact would that make upon the world? Well, perhaps we will never know. And there is another obstacle, number seven, because it does not correspond to what I've always believed.

And I remember, I can identify with that, because when I first heard the truth claims about dispensational truth and about the mystery that had been committed unto Paul, he said that God raised me up for that specific purpose, that I might reveal the mystery which had been hidden in God from time past, was not revealed to men before.

[26 : 44] And when I first heard that, my response was, that can't be true. I know it can't be true because that's not what I've always believed.

how's that for naivete? And yet, there are some people who reason that way. And then, some find it to be an obstacle because they recognize that if they embrace that as true, it is going to result in my making changes that I don't want to make.

work. So, I'm not going to embrace this thing at point A because of where it is going to lead and I don't want to go there. And then there is honest disbelief or intellectual objections.

And these are the most honorable of all. These are the people who really just don't believe this stuff and they just don't believe the Bible and they don't believe Christianity and they might not even believe that there is a God.

but they hold that position honestly. They are honest in their intellectual rejection of these things. And there are people like that.

[27 : 54] C.S. Lewis was one for a number of years and I'm sure there were many others. And honest disbelief, intellectual objections, honest ignorance.

Paul was one of those. Paul lamented the fact that he had persecuted the church of God. And he said, but I did it ignorantly and in unbelief.

I really thought I was right. And you know that was really nothing more than a fulfillment of what Jesus told his disciples the night that he was betrayed.

He told them. He warned them. He said, fellas, the time is coming when those who would kill you would think they are doing God a service.

boy, how would that be to look forward to? And Saul of Tarsus was one of those. Of course, none of the twelve knew that at the time, but they were going to find out later.

[28 : 57] And then there is intellectual laziness. faith. And I suspect that most of us have a problem with that. We've all got a touch of that at least.

So, what we are here for on Sunday morning, or at least what we are supposed to be here for, is to traffic in truth.

May God help us if we do not do that since it is our primary endeavor. I hope you really think of that seriously.

Trafficking in truth is the human being's most serious endeavor. And that includes just truth about everything and anything.

Just truth in general. Truth at times can be elusive, but finding it is worth every effort put forth, because nothing rewards like truth.

[30 : 06] Truth is humanity's most noble pursuit, and when pursued to its fullest and most logical end, you arrive at the person of Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Truth rewards its pursuers with the thrill of reality and discovery. truth is our most priceless commodity.

I think it was Winston Churchill who during the war said that truth is the first casualty of war, and that the truth is so precious that we surround it with a bodyguard of lies.

Think about that. Whenever nations are at war, truth becomes imperative. We call it intel, intelligence, or surveillance, or reconnaissance, things.

Because you need to know what the enemy is up to. You need to know what their capabilities are. You need to know what their strength and their numbers are. And all of these things have to do with truth. And then, in the midst of it all, nations are sending out disinformation to each other that is

designed to confuse and obfuscate and hide the truth.

[31 : 33] So that's the bodyguard of lies that we surround the truth with. Because when you know the truth about your enemy, you really have a leg up. And this is why we have spies.

This is what spying is all about. It's to infiltrate the enemy and learn what their capabilities and their intentions are so that you can successfully combat it and win the war.

We well remember hearing stories about Japanese or about in our conflict with the Japanese and included in the United States Army contingency that was sent to the Far East.

It was a group of Navajo Indians and they had their own language and they could communicate with each other through secret directives in the Navajo language and it gave the Japanese fits because they couldn't decode that.

And these truth talkers, Navajo truth talkers, became prominent heroes of World War II because they were able to communicate messages that the Japanese could not decipher.

[32 : 48] And the story goes on about all kinds of breaking of codes. So what I would like you to do now in addition to what Gary read for us is go to Proverbs, if you would.

It's got a lot to say about truth. And we're just going to meander through here. We're not going to take all of them but we're just going to take some that I've selected for your consideration and then we'll open it for some Q&A.;

Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 3. I've got to be kind of selective because, you know, there are so very many Proverbs.

Proverbs 3 verses 3 and 4. Do not let kindness and truth leave you.

Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart so you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.

[33 : 55] And then over, if you would please, to Proverbs chapter 8. And verse 7. For my mouth will utter truth and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness. There is nothing crooked or perverted in them. And then in chapter 12 of Proverbs.

And I'm skipping many of them. Proverbs has got a lot more to say about truth than what I'm reading. But from the portion that Gary read, let's look at it again. Chapter 12 beginning with verse 17. He who speaks who speaks truth tells what is right, but a false witness deceit.

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrust of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment.

deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy. No harm befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble.

[35 : 20] Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are his delight. You know, that makes it worth it right there, even if you don't have anything to add to it.

Just to think that you have the ability of delighting God. That's no small thing. You have the ability to delight God just with your truthfulness.

And in chapter 14 and verse 22, some of you are thinking, well, I didn't know Proverbs had this much to say about truth. Let me tell you, it's got a lot more to say than what we're giving you.

But in chapter 14 and verse 22, will they not go astray who devise evil, but kindness and truth will be to those who devise good.

And chapter 16 and verse 6, by loving kindness and truth iniquity is atoned for.

[36 : 34] And by the fear of the Lord, one keeps away from evil. And then, if you would, chapter 20 and verse 28, Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 28, loyalty and truth preserve the king and he upholds his throne by righteousness.

The glory of young men is their strength and the honor of old men is their gray hair. Stripes that wound scour away evil and strokes teach the innermost part, reach the innermost parts.

And Proverbs chapter 22 in verse 17, incline your ear and hear the words of the wise and apply your mind to my knowledge for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you that you may be ready on your lips so that your trust may be in the Lord.

I have taught you today, even you, have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge to make you know the certainty of the words of truth that you may correctly answer to him who sent you.

And our last is in chapter 23 and verse 22. Listen to your father who begot you and do not despise your mother when she is old.

[38 : 15] Buy truth and do not sell it. Get wisdom and instruction and understanding. I think the King James says buy the truth and sell it not.

And that's a beautiful expression. And what it says to me is truth is so valuable you should be willing to pay for it. Actually, isn't that what you kids are doing in college?

You're there to learn. You're there to gain knowledge and wisdom and truth. and you pay for it. So truth is the kind of thing that you should be willing to pay for.

But when he says sell it not, that means you don't give it up at any price. You're not willing to surrender the truth for any amount of money.

Because truth is precious and priceless. truth is as much of what God is about as anything else.

[39 : 21] Couple that with his love and you've got an incomprehensible being that orders the affairs of this universe. And he is all about truth.

well. So I just wanted to offer that as being a kind of review or reinforcement as to what we are supposed to be all about.

And if you have some comments or questions now we would be happy to entertain them. And I know that this message is probably different from what some of you were expecting.

But okay. Joe up here has a comment or question. Here comes the mic, Joe. Wait for the mic. With several of these verses that you went to and quoted, mercy is included right along with truth.

Would you explain further the connection there? Mercy and truth? Why are they together? I'm not sure that I can answer that. Well, we know truth is that which corresponds to reality.

[40 : 29] Mercy appears to be the withholding of what is due. So we think of mercy as you're not getting what you deserve.

And mercy and grace, by the way, are very closely connected. And actually, truth is just one of the several attributes of God.

And there are a host of attributes that belong to God. Those are those characteristics that make God God. God. And truth is just one of them.

And he is a God of mercy. He's a God of grace. He's, you know, Paul includes those in almost all of his greetings to the churches that he writes to. I cannot think right off the top of my head of there being a connection between mercy and truth.

But maybe somebody else has something to offer. Joe, what again? Do they not err that devise evil, but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

[41 : 42] Mercy and truth will both be to those that devise good. Yeah, when you devise something, it means that you plan for it and you prepare for it and you intend it.

God's mercy is extended to those who are devising, preparing, and planning for truth and intend to bring truth.

It's another way, I think, of saying that God reads the heart, the intent, and God rewards the right intent and the right attitude of the heart with mercy.

That would be my off the top of my head explanation. Mercy is extended, and it ties in with the word pity also.

The Lord pitieth those, and we are recipients of God's mercy, God's pity, God's grace, God's love. God's grace.

[42 : 47] Boy, it just goes on and on. Other thoughts or comments? Okay, Dave has one over here. At the beginning of your message, you said, you proposed to the question, why do we come here every week?

And I can remember you saying some years back that you likened it to a spiritual hospital every week that we would come here and get the word. Yeah, thank you for that expression, too.

And we've made the point, and you know a lot of people on the outside, they don't have a clue.

They don't understand church or anything about it. And you would be surprised how many people never darken the doors of any church who think that a church is a place where people have it all together and they gather together to congratulate themselves on having it all together.

And it's about as opposite as you can get because the real rationale for believers in Christ, at least, coming together is that we are outwardly admitting we do not have it all together, that we are flawed, failing human beings, and that we need each other.

And there's nothing wrong with needing each other because God made us to be interdependent.

And there is a good thing about being independent.

[44 : 21] That simply means you row your own boat to the extent that you are able, but there are times when you're not able, and we come alongside and help one another. And someone said that church is just a place where people go together where one beggar is telling another beggar where to find bread.

That's what church is. And church is for people who fully acknowledge their flaws and that were not, like one brother put it, I'm not all that I want to be.

I'm not all that I'm going to be. But thank God I'm not what I was. And we can all attest to that because Christ makes that difference. Any other thoughts or comments?

Feel free. Anyone? Well, it would pain, it would deeply pain me if I let you go a full 15 minutes early.

But will you promise not to tell anyone? Okay. Well, it is a beautiful day. I trust that everybody got their clock set right the way they're supposed to.

[45 : 43] And that you will be going to the polls if you haven't already engaged in early voting or absentee voting. That you will exercise your responsibility as a believer.

You know, I've often said that a believer in Jesus Christ should be the most valuable citizen that the country has. And we are able to bring a perspective to the voting booth that the world desperately needs that generally rejects.

And that's a tough call, but that's part of our responsibility. Anything else anybody has to share? I want you to feel free. We've got the time to do it, but we don't have to take it.

I'm going to let you out of here early then and you will beat the Baptist buffet. Would you stand, please? Our Father, we rejoice in the fact that there are facts.

There is truth and it is knowable and how grateful we are that you took greatest truths that occur to your incredible mind and you wrapped them all up in a person.

[47 : 03] You sent him down here to this world that is so filled with untruth. Little wonder that Jesus met the opposition that he did then and still meets that opposition to this day.

How grateful we are that truth can overcome the error and the lie. We want to be people who are eager for the truth, seekers of the truth, defenders of the truth, proclaimers of the truth, and Lord, help us to be especially sensitive to anything that we discover to be untrue that did not proceed out of our lips for it is dishonoring to you.

Thank you for a world of reality that we can understand at least to some degree. Thank you for this incredible gift that you've given us called human volition, the ability to please you as well as displease you.

And our heart's cry and prayer today is that each of us will redouble our efforts to walk in the spirit and make ourselves to be pleasing and acceptable to you.

It is the very least that we can do for the enormous price you paid to make it available to us. Thank you for each of these dear folks, for any who may be here in our number this morning that are still looking for answers that have not found them in the person of Jesus Christ.

[48 : 43] We pray that you will make yourself known and available to them in any way that we can help, any way that we can encourage them. We want to be eager to do it. Thank you for being the God of truth.

In Jesus' wonderful name, Amen.