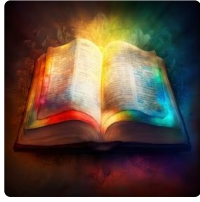


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Knowledge of The Truth (Part 1)



Authority of Scriptures - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explores the importance of understanding and valuing the authority of the Bible in his discussion on the knowledge of truth. He emphasizes the need for a balanced approach between anti-intellectualism and hyper-intellectualism within Christian circles and believes that rational thinking and reasoning are important. Gregg provides an overview of two general categories of discipline: apologetics and epistemology, which aim to provide a defense and rational justification for one's beliefs, respectively. Knowing the truth is key to personal freedom, deliverance from the bondage of sin, and is a life-long journey that requires seeking truth wholeheartedly.

Transcript

I'm studying a variety of topics that all fall under one general heading, and that heading I have entitled the Authority of Scripture. I used to call this series the Authority of the Word, although I found that if I'm not very exact about the titles I give, there's always the capacity for someone to misunderstand. I taught this series, or an earlier version of it, in Youth With a Mission, DTs, and schools of evangelism for about 16 years.

This series has been developing for that long. It's not exactly now as it was when I began, but that's when I began to put together the information that we'll be sharing in this series. I remember once I was teaching at Youth With a Mission this series, and somebody who was on staff who was not in the classes and not acquainted with the lectures asked me, what are you teaching the students this week? And I said, I'm teaching about the Authority of the Word, which is what I used to call the series.

And she says, oh yeah, we really need to, the students really need to know about the Authority of the Word. And she began to talk, I don't remember her exact words, but it became clear to me she didn't understand what I meant by the word. She was thinking more in terms of, I think, a word of faith kind of thing.

You speak the word, and there's authority in the word that you speak, and it creates realities and things like that. And I realized I need to be a little more exact in my labeling. Truth in labeling, I guess, is a concern of mine that people don't misunderstand

from the beginning what we're talking about.

We're talking about not, when I say the word, I'm not talking about what some people call the rhema word from God, although I believe in such, of course. I'm not talking about your words, as if your words have power in them, and to a certain extent they may, through the Spirit. But that's not the subject matter we're talking about.

I just want you to know that. I'm not discounting any of these other things, necessarily. I'm simply saying that's not what I mean when I'm talking about the Authority of the Word.

I'm talking about the word in terms of the inscripturated word, the Bible. And therefore, of course, we now call the series The Authority of Scripture, just so that it be not ambiguous and people don't make the mistake of not knowing what we're talking about. Now, in this school, the typical thing is that we spend nine months going through the Bible.

This particular group of students will be in a shorter course, but still you'll be looking at the Bible a great deal. Now, looking at the Bible can become a burdensome thing unless you are quite convinced that God is going to speak to you and that he will reveal to you truth that will change your life as you study it. To my mind, the study of Scripture can just be as burdensome and dull as the study of any ancient history or some other subject that you might find dull.

But it needn't be, because the Word of God is alive and it's powerful and it's sharper than a two-edged sword, according to its own statements. Jesus said, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. And there is, in my opinion, and my opinion has been formed over the course of many decades of not only teaching the Word, but living as best I know how, according to the Scripture, there is a life and a dynamic and a thrill of studying the Scriptures when the Holy Spirit is bringing them to life and bringing about changes in the life.

And that is what we hope will happen as you study with us in this school. And I am a firm advocate of a concept that is called truth. And you'll find that the lecture this morning, the handout I've given you, has this title, Authority and the Knowledge of Truth.

And this is sort of introductory to get your mind thinking about things that a lot of people often don't think about. When I give a series of lectures, it's not too uncommon for people afterwards to say, well, you answered all kinds of questions that I never had. And I say, shame on you that you never had these questions.

It's amazing how unthinking Christians often are, and not just Christians. Non-Christians are equally unthinking, I think, on the whole. But there's no excuse for Christians to be unthinking.

We realize that the mind is not an evil thing. The mind is not even a neutral thing in itself. It can be turned to evil purposes, but the mind is an aspect of the image of God that God put into man, which he did not put into the animals.

The animals are not made rational beings. God made all the animal world, and he had not yet made a rational being, except the angels, but among the earthly creation. There was not a rational being on the planet until God made man.

And he did so with this announcement. Let us make man in our own image and after our likeness. And it is the rational power of the mind that is at least one aspect by which humanity differs from all other creatures.

That like God, we can think. Animals do things that seem very intelligent. If you study an anthill or a beehive and see how that society is structured and so forth, it's almost hard to believe that those creatures aren't smart.

They seem as though they're smart, but everything they do, they do by instinct. They don't have sufficient brains to think. They could certainly never organize themselves, and they don't learn anything.

They're born doing those things. Creatures may appear to be wise at times, and the Bible may even, as a concession, speak of the wisdom of certain creatures, the wisdom of the coney because it's a small creature and hides in the rocks, or the wisdom of the ant because it stores up its food in the summer for the wintertime. The Bible may use that kind of accommodative language, but it is certainly not arguing that ants and coneys have rational thinking and that they've thought this through and that the ant really knows.

You look at the calendar, it says, well, I've got so many more weeks and the snow's going to come, I'd better store up X amount of food. People can do that, and people do do that. Joseph did that.

He knew there was a famine coming, he stored up food. That was wisdom. With the ant, it only is the appearance of wisdom.

The ant does this without knowing anything about what it is doing. Man and woman, the human race, are the only creatures on the earth that God has made rational, and we should not think lightly of that. Now, it does not mean that IQ or intelligence is somehow a measure of godliness, because God has sometimes chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

When I say that the capacity to be rational and to think and to reason, that is an aspect of the image of godliness. That doesn't mean that the person who is the most rational is the most godlike. It might seem like that would follow, but it's not necessarily so.

It is not the only aspect of God's likeness in us, and a person might be very rational but very ungodlike in other important areas, maybe in areas that are much more important than rationality. So I want to begin by putting the whole idea of thinking and rational thought and reasoning, I want to put that in its proper perspective, because it is sometimes the case that Christians will discount rational thinking. They will think, well, that's the wisdom of man.

If you think hard, you're being carnal. Paul said to the Corinthians, when I came to you, I didn't come with, what is it, enticing words of man's wisdom declaring to you the gospel of God. I didn't want your faith to rest in human reasoning, he said, but in the power of God.

The Proverbs say, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. So, I mean, these kinds of scriptures sometimes make people think, well, it must be carnal to think, because we're not supposed to lean on our own understanding. There must be something that's supposed to replace rationality to the Christian.

So think some, apparently. And so we have a really prevalent anti-intellectualism in some parts of the church. And on the other hand, we have a rampant, what shall I say, hyper-intellectualism in another area of the church.

I mean, we might say in the more Pentecostal oriented, more charismatic oriented, and by the way, I love that description. In the more charismatic oriented sector of the church, you'll find many times a criminal anti-intellectualism, a fear of the mind, a fear of thinking, for fear that we might miss something because we're thinking about it. God wants, you know, as if God only wants people to unthinkingly experience him.

And at the other end, you know, some of the other sectors of the church, you'll find people who would deny that there's any experience with God himself, we thought. It's all just, you just got to figure it all out with your brain. And once you have all the right views, everything's fine.

That's wrong too. I would hope that we can have a balanced biblical approach to this, realizing that there is nothing to be afraid of about thinking. If you're not a real good thinker, if God didn't give you a lot of gifts in that area, that is not, that shouldn't make you feel condemned.

But to the degree that God has given you the ability to reason and to think, that is one of the many gifts of God that is to be applied in his service. Jesus said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and all your mind. Jesus said, the seed that fell on the wayside and the birds ate it.

And it never grew because the birds ate it. He said, that's those people who hear the

gospel, they hear the word of the kingdom, and they don't understand it. And then the devil comes and steals it from them.

The mind is an organ of understanding. God said in Jeremiah chapter 9, let him that glories, that he knows and understands me. There is a place for understanding, and we need to make sure, depending on what your background is, I don't even know, I haven't asked everybody what kind of church they come from.

Of course, you don't know much about my background probably either, but I would say this, that you can go in some churches, and there's almost a total dead intellectualism going on there. I mean, they exalt the preacher who can parse the Greek words the best and can quote the most heady authorities and so forth. I don't much like that kind of church.

On the other hand, I don't much like going to the kind of church where intellect is ridiculed, and where reasoning is considered to be a boogeyman, that people shouldn't have anything to do with, because that might lead them into some satanic error or something. Certainly, men by reasoning have often been led astray, but only by invalid reasoning. Truth is available to be known, and reasoning is one way in which truth can be known.

Now, in the lectures in this series, there are kind of two general categories of discipline, I guess you could say, that we're going to be covering. And these words, if you're not familiar with them, I hope it won't intimidate you. I'll tell you quickly what they are, I'll tell you what they mean.

The words are apologetics and epistemology. You might say, well, I thought I was getting into a Bible school, not into a school of philosophy. Well, this is not a school of philosophy, and we will not try to use too many words that you're not familiar with.

But I will say this, there's no virtue in having a small vocabulary. There's no virtue in having a big vocabulary either. But don't think that, well, I don't want to get this big vocabulary, because that will make me less spiritual.

The fact of the matter is, vocabulary is a servant of truth, of communication. And the only reason to learn words that you don't know, you know, is because it promotes an economy of effort in communication. If you know a concept, and you can express it using a paragraph of words, well, that's fine.

But if you know one word that conveys that whole paragraph of information, and your listener knows that word too, you can simply use that word, and you don't have to use the whole paragraph every time you want to talk about it. That's the value of vocabulary. You can find often a word that in itself, its definition is a paragraph long, but if everyone knows the word, you don't have to read the whole definition of it every time you want to

communicate the thought.

And apologetics and epistemology are words that you could probably, not probably, you could certainly go to heaven without ever having heard them or known what they mean. But for the sake of knowing which direction we're going, and what it is we're studying here, I want you to know these two words. You never have to use them again if you don't want to.

Apologetics is more likely to be the familiar word of the two to the Christian, because I'm sure most of you could probably tell me, how many of you have heard the word apologetics? Okay, almost everyone. Probably everyone here. Apologetics comes from a Greek word, as many of our English words do, and the Greek word is apologia, which means a defense.

Peter uses that word. In 1 Peter chapter 3, and I believe it's verse 15, where he says, let me read it to you. By the way, I'm going to be, this is early in the year, you don't know yet, I'll be using for the most part the New King James version.

It doesn't matter which version you use. But this is the version you'll hear me reading from. In 1 Peter chapter 3, and verse 15, Peter said, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

To give everyone an answer, the word answer there, the Greek word is apologia, in the context it has the meaning, and in the lexicons it has the meaning, of a defense. An apologia in the Greek is to give, not what we think of as an apology, you know, when we give an apology it means we say we're sorry for something we did. And we're not told to apologize for being Christians.

There's nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed about being Christians, but we are to be prepared to give an apologia for our faith, which simply means a defense. But we're told to be able to do that. Now, as far as I'm concerned, an apologia doesn't have to be intellectual in nature.

If someone says, why do you believe in God, you can just say, well, he's never failed me yet, and that's a very good reason. That's a good defense. My testimony is that I've followed Jesus since I was four years old, and he's never failed me yet.

I've got a long list of answered prayers that were impossible, apart from God, to be fulfilled, and yet they've been fulfilled, and I've got very good reasons for believing. That's a good apologetic. Usually when people talk about apologetics, they're talking more about giving a rational or maybe a scientific or philosophical defense for the faith.

But that's not all that falls under that category. Any time somebody is challenging you, or you're anticipating being challenged about what you believe, and you give an answer,

a defense, for your belief system, whether you're defending the inspiration of Scripture, or you're defending your version of the Gospel opposed to the Jehovah's Witness version of the Gospel, or you're answering an evolutionist and providing evidence that evolution is false, any of those are exercises in what we call apologetics. It is the science or the discipline of giving a defense for one's belief, and this is not only true in terms of Christian belief.

Anyone in philosophy or in any theoretical field that they're in, they may be involved in apologetics as far as defending their position about something in a controversial arena. Christians, I believe, the Bible exhorts us to be involved at least in some measure in apologetics. We should have an ability to give some kind of a defense for the faith.

And part of what we'll be doing this week and the following week in these lectures is discovering what some of the defenses are that are possible to give for the faith. In particular, we're going to focus on a narrow area of apologetics, and that is the defense of the Scriptures as a reliable witness from God, the inspiration of the Scriptures, in other words. There are many other areas of apologetics.

Defending one doctrinal system against another doctrinal system within Christianity is apologetics, too, but that's not what we're going to be getting into in these lectures. In the course of these lectures, especially the early lectures in this series, we'll be wading around, maybe a little deep sometimes, in the area of what is called apologetics. That's one of the disciplines that we're going to be exercising ourselves in this series.

And the other is, I said, epistemology. Now, you might think you can guess what epistemology would be. Isn't that the study of the epistles? No, it isn't, actually.

I'm not even sure much about the roots of this word. I'm not that intellectual myself to have looked up the roots of it. Someone here may know more than I do about it.

But I know what it means. Epistemology is the study of the grounds of knowledge. Now, that sounds even pretty heady itself, so I'll just put it plainly.

When you're talking about epistemology, you're talking about how do you know something. Why do you believe something? How do you know something is true? What is the basis of your conviction? Why do you believe this when there's something else available to believe that you reject? What is it that tips the scales in favor of the view that you hold, as opposed to all the views you reject? Why do you believe what you do? Do you have a basis for it? Is there a reason to believe it? And why do you do the things you do? Why do you think that such and such a course of life is a right course of life, and you reject other courses as wrong? This is what we mean when we talk about the whole field of epistemology, examining what is the basis for my believing or knowing anything. Now, you can tell by the title of this lecture, Authority and the Knowledge of Truth, you can probably tell that this lecture addresses more that realm of epistemology.

How do I know the truth? On what authority do I base my knowledge of what things I consider true? And if you would guess that that is what this lecture is about, you'd be correct. We're going to talk about how do we know the truth. On what authority do we base our information? Now, you'll notice if you look at the notes I gave you, way down at the bottom, Roman numeral number 7, the very last section of the notes is called the Authority of Scripture, which you may recognize as also the name of this lecture series.

So I just want you to glance down there briefly, and then we'll glance at the top of the notes, and you'll see that wherever it is that we are starting, we're going to end up looking at the Authority of Scripture. But all the points one through six before that are steps that I believe are necessary to a thinking person to reach a conclusion about the Authority of Scripture. I want to make something very clear.

I believe the Bible is the Word of God, but I believe that a thinking person can't just, you know, walk into the Christian life knowing nothing, and say, okay, someone said this is the Word of God, I accept it, it's the Word of God. Now, you might think that's a very good thing to do, but you see, that's what Mormons do, or a lot of other people. They simply believe that whatever the convictions are of the group they're in are true.

Why? Because they're held by the people, it's the view of the religion that I've adopted. A person who's raised a Mormon is almost certainly going to say that the Book of Mormon is the Word of God, and the Pearl of Great Price is the Word of God. And if you ask them why, well, they may not even know why they believe it, but, you know, if you could examine it, you'd find out it's because that's just part of what they're supposed to believe as Mormons.

It's not as if they've looked carefully at the Book of Mormon and examined it and its truth claims, and tried to see whether its claims match up with reality as we know it elsewhere. It's simply that it's a matter of believing what they're told. It's just adopting the assumption of the inspiration of these books, because that's part of being part of this religion.

It may be that they believe it because their parents told them, and they've never had any reason to doubt it. Now, what I'm saying about the Mormons is not to bad-mouth the Mormons. What I'm trying to say is that Christians can be of exactly the same mind with no more validity than the Mormons have in being of that state of mind.

If you say, if I say, why do you believe the Bible? If you say, well, because the Bible's the Word of God. If I say, well, why, what makes you think the Bible's the Word of God? Well, isn't that what all Christians believe? Aren't Christians supposed to believe that? Well, I think they are. Yes, I think they are.

But is that why you believe it? Because Christians are supposed to believe it? Because when you adopted Christianity, you came into a communion of people who happened to

all affirm that they believe the Bible's the Word of God, and so you just began to take that mantra on your lips, because that's what they say in this group of people. They're called Christians. What if they're wrong? People can be wrong.

Even Christians can be wrong. How do you know the Bible's the Word of God? Now, if you don't have a very, if you don't know why you hold it's the Word of God, you may believe the Bible for the same reason that the Mormons believe the Book of Mormon. Maybe you were raised, as I was, in a Christian family.

I've always believed the Bible's the Word of God. I've never had any other opinion about it than that. A lot of Mormons believe the Book of Mormon's the Word of God for the same reason.

They were raised thinking that. The difference is, they're wrong and I'm right, right? Well, how do I know I'm right and they're wrong? Maybe if I was raised a Mormon instead of a Christian, I would have felt the same way about the Book of Mormon as I now feel about the Bible. How do I know that I'm right and they're wrong? And this is where it becomes important to me, at least, and I should think it would to any thinking person, to say, well, listen, if truth exists, I want to make sure that truth is what I know and not some clever deception.

And I want to know why it is that I believe certain things to be true and certain things not to be true because there are people who believe that those things I think are not true. There's people out there who believe those are true. And the question I need to ask myself is, do I have a better reason to believe that this is true than they have to believe that that's true? Because if I don't, maybe they're right and I'm wrong.

And frankly, this matters maybe to me more than it matters to most people because my whole vocation is that of a Bible teacher. And if the Bible isn't true, I'd just soon change vocations before I've used up my whole life. I've been doing this for 30 years.

Some people might say, well, you're so deeply entrenched that you couldn't change now. Well, I sure would want to if someone could convince me that the Bible is not true, it's not the Word of God. I'd sure want to change.

Maybe some people wouldn't. There may be people out there who taught the Bible for 20, 30 years and then they begin to have their doubts about it and they can no longer honestly believe it, but they still choose to teach it anyway because it's easier to be dishonest than it is to change your whole direction in life. I just want you to know that that is not where I'm at.

I would just soon stop teaching the Bible and do something entirely different. I don't care how old I am when I change. I don't want to waste one day of my life teaching something that isn't true.

And although I'm not convinced that every opinion I have is true, and some opinions I have are certainly I'm looking for more light on to know more, but as soon as I know something isn't true or have reason to believe something isn't true, I sure want to quit teaching it. And therefore, it's very important to me to know whether the Bible that I've devoted my whole life to teaching is really what it claims to be and what I claim that it is. By the way, I don't have anything to gain by perpetrating a deception.

I don't get paid for what I do. If I did, one might wonder. It's his job.

He makes his living teaching the Bible. Even if he didn't believe it, he'd probably still teach it because he makes his living. I don't receive pay for teaching.

And for that reason, I don't have any motivation to teach the Bible except that I'm convinced that it's true and that everyone needs to know it. Now, you may not have all the same motivations I do because you may not be in the same kind of activity and vocation I am, but as a person, just as a human being, who only gets to live one time on this planet, you only get one chance to get it right, I would hope that you'd all just instinctively want to get it right. I don't want to live my whole life feeling what I've got and get it all wrong.

If there's truth, if there's reality, if there's something to know, I sure hate to think when I got to the end of my life, I spent my whole life knowing something different than what was true and believing something that was just a big lie. My whole life was a lie. That doesn't matter to people as much today, I think, as it did when I was younger.

You know how old people like me always reminisce about the good old days and how kids were smarter and better and always more perfect than the present generation. But I don't think I'm given too much to that. Maybe I am, more than I know.

But I will say this. I'm 45 years old. I was in my mid-teens around 1970.

And in Southern California where I grew up, essentially the hippie movement was kind of the prevailing cultural phenomenon of my generation. And while I was a Christian long before I was a teenager and therefore never got swept up in the hippie movement, there were things about it I did appreciate, including the fact that the hippies, at least supposedly, were challenging things, challenging norms. They felt that their parents had just picked up traditional ideas from their ancestors, had never thought them through, and that many of those traditional ideas weren't really all that right.

They felt that they were raised by parents, they felt, who were kind of just wrapped up in materialism and had lost any interest in spiritual things, that they'd adopted a moral standard that was passed down to them without any validity and so forth. And the hippies were a rebellious people. Probably rebellion, which is not a good thing, by the way.

I'm not here to praise the hippie movement. I believe it was a very sinful movement. But it had something, it produced something.

Probably just in the sovereignty of God, he extracted something from it that was of value. And that was that the hippies just didn't want to believe what their parents said. They didn't want to just adopt what their parents had always adopted.

They wanted to think it through. They wanted to know what's true. They wanted to experiment.

They wanted to take mind-altering drugs to see if that would kind of expand their consciousness and give them some grasp of reality that their parents had missed. Of course, they were looking at all the wrong places and they reached all the wrong conclusions. But the fact of the matter is, one element that you'd always find, when I was a teenager, among anyone my age, is they were either on a search for the truth or else they claimed to be.

Now, I don't believe that everyone who claimed to be searching for the truth was honest. I think a lot of people back then were just as much interested in just seeking pleasure and seeking their own selfish ends in life as is true of any generation. But at least it was not considered hip to not be searching for the truth.

I mean, to get involved in deep philosophical discussions about what reality is and what God is and what's right and what's wrong, this was what everyone wanted to do in my generation. It was just the thing, to be in search of the truth. Now, there are fortunately some youths today who are that way, but surveys have shown that something like 90% of freshmen entering college just in the United States worldwide, or I mean nationwide, excuse me, nationwide in the United States, when surveyed, something upwards of 90% of freshmen entering college have said they don't believe there is such a thing as truth.

They don't believe in absolute truth at all. They believe in what is called relativism. Relativism is more or less expressed in the statement, well, you know, I'm glad that's true to you.

Something else is true to me. Whatever's true to you, be true to yourself. And, you know, and you find this attitude sometimes with people who say, when you're trying to tell them the gospel, say, well, we're glad you found something that works for you.

That's your truth. Hinduism is my truth, or, you know, the New Age is my truth, or Buddhism, or some other thing. Atheism is my truth, but it's fine that you, Christianity is your truth.

As if there is no objective truth that holds good for all, there's just whatever you perceive is true is true to you, and that's all that matters. That's relativism, and it is the prevailing spirit of the generation that most of you are from. I'm not saying that any of you are

caught up in it, because you're Christians, obviously, and you may be remarkable exceptions to the rule.

But your generation is a little different, motivated, than mine was. There's a Christian professor over at Linfield, not very many of them. Linfield's an American Baptist college, but you won't find many Christians on the faculty or in the student body.

There are some. But one of the few Christian faculty members over there is a friend of ours. He's a professor of, I think, physics.

And he's an older guy, older than me even. And as that can be imagined, he's not even retired. But he was teaching over there, I suppose, for 30 years.

And he told me once, he says, you know, he was, I think, a very conservative guy 30 years ago, I think of a Baptist, if I'm not mistaken, background. And he said that back in the 70s, the students scared him to death. All these long-haired, hippie-type students, and they're all challenging everything he says, and saying, how do you know that's true, and so forth.

And, you know, he's philosophically challenged everything he said. He said that scared him to death. It really intimidated him, having these students all, you know, concerned to test him out to see if he's telling the truth.

But he says, I'd give anything for those students now. He says, these days, the students don't even want to believe there is such a thing. They don't care about truth.

He says, the students in the 70s, he said, what they wanted to know is, what is the truth? He says, the students of the 90s, what they wanted to know is, how can I make a living? And he says, I'd trade those 70s students any day. Because he's a Christian, and even though he was challenged by those who were concerned to know the truth, and not willing to just believe that he was telling the truth, just because he said so. That was challenging to him.

But he says, man, would it be refreshing to have people like that again? He almost got kicked out once for teaching that there is such a thing as truth in the college. It's amazing how far things can drift in 30 years. But what I'm suggesting to you is that we need to be, first of all, aware that there is such a thing as truth.

We need to know how to acquire knowledge of the truth. And I'm going to tell you why we need to, as we go through and look at some scriptures on that subject. That may seem like a long introduction, but you haven't heard me very much yet.

It's not such a long introduction. Sometimes it takes me two sessions to finish my introduction. Let's get down to the notes I've given you.

And what, as often as possible, I like to start by defining my terms. It seems to me communication works best if we all know what the words mean we're using. If this lecture is entitled Authority and the Knowledge of Truth, I'd like to make sure we all know what we mean by authority and knowledge and truth.

So I'll just go, I'll give you dictionary definitions for those things, because I'm not using those words any differently than they're used commonly in the American language. Authority, according to the American College Dictionary, is the right to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues or disputes. The right to command, control, or determine.

Now this is a very standard definition of authority. In fact, I would imagine that if I had asked you each individually to give me a definition of authority, I would hope that many of you would have come up with maybe a little shorter definition, but something along the same lines. Basically, authority is the right to determine, the right to rule, really.

When Jesus said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, all that really means is he has been given a position above all others, and he has the right to rule. He has the right to be obeyed. He has the right to determine everything without being further challenged.

That's what authority means. Now sometimes people think of authority, especially Christians, think of authority in a little more mystical sense, like authority over sickness, or authority over the wind and the waves, or something like when Jesus commanded. But as if, you know, I mean, those are miraculous things.

Jesus' authority was often demonstrated in miraculous things. And so was that of the disciples, and I believe such authority is still demonstrated that way in many situations. But it can be a little bit, it can lead us astray.

If we think, well, Jesus' authority is seen in the fact that he cast out demons, he healed sickness, he commanded the wind and the waves, and they obeyed him. Now all of that is true. It is because of his authority that he could do those things.

But all of those things I just mentioned were supernatural things, and therefore some people might think authority has something to do with supernatural power. I've known a great number of people who've made that mistake. The word authority just means the right to rule.

It is true, Jesus' authority was demonstrated in casting out demons because he had the right to rule over them. He could say, get out, and they had to get out. Same thing with sickness.

He could rebuke the fever in Peter's mother-in-law, and it had to go away. He could rebuke the wind and the waves, and because he had the right to rule, they had to obey

him. And it is in these kinds of circumstances that the authority of Christ is demonstrated in a supernatural way, which proved, and by the way, he says in the Bible, that this is what proved that he was authoritative, because even the demons obeyed him, even sickness, even the weather obeyed him.

But that's only part, and it's even the smaller part, of what it means to say that all authority in heaven and earth is given him. All authority means that he has the right to rule everybody, and anybody who doesn't obey him is a rebel against their rightful ruler. And that means people and angels, as well as demons and weather and all kinds of other things, anything in the universe is under his authority, which means he has the right to rule it.

There are people who have authority who don't have any power to enforce it. That's the difference between Jesus and some people in authority, and that's why it gets confusing. Jesus not only can have the right to rule, he has the power to make things happen.

He's God. Whereas I might, for example, if I'm going away on a trip for a week, I might tell my son, I want you to mow the lawn twice while I'm gone, and tell my daughter, I want you to wash the dishes for your mother every night. Now, I'm the father, I have authority.

That means I have the right to tell them to do those things, and they should do it. If they don't, they're in violation of genuine authority. They're wrong.

But if I'm gone for a week, I don't have the power to make them do it. I might come home and find out that they didn't do the things I said to do. And I was powerless to change it, because I wasn't even there.

Now, the fact that I didn't have the power to make them do it doesn't mean I had any less authority. Authority and power are two different things. God has both.

Jesus has both. But we need to understand that the two are not the same thing. The ability to forcibly make something happen is power.

The right to command it and expect it to happen is authority. But a person with genuine authority might be powerless to enforce it. If I were a paraplegic, a quadriplegic in a wheelchair, and I couldn't do anything, I couldn't make my children obey it, if I still commanded them to be quiet over there, they should do it.

Even though I can't enforce it, I have no power. I'm paralyzed from the neck down, it may be, but I still have authority. I'm still the father.

I still have the right to rule. And therefore, we need to understand authority in those terms, because that's what it means. A lot of times, there may be other aspects of the definition that we import wrongly, out of wrong association.

So, when we talk about authority, we're talking about, essentially, the right to determine, to adjudicate, or otherwise to settle issues or disputes, the right to command, control, or determine, we might add, without further challenge. A person who has authority has the right to settle the question and not be further challenged. If my kids are fighting in another room, which they rarely do, but they're fighting over a toy, and I come in and say, what's going on here, and she says, well, I had this first, and he said, well, I said she could use it first for a few minutes, and now she's keeping it too long, and so forth, and it's time for me to have it, and there's all this confusion.

If they're left to themselves, that'll never be settled until one of them just gives up. You know, whoever's got the most endurance will win, but it won't mean that the person who's in the right will win. But when I come in there, I can say, no, you play with it for the next ten minutes, and then he plays with it for ten minutes, end of dispute.

Why? Because I'm an authority. I've settled the issue. It would never be settled without some authority there, except by brute force or endurance.

And, of course, that's how many issues in human life and history have been settled, by brute force. And it hasn't always been those who are in the right who win. But the Christian, certainly, is concerned that proper authority be honored, even if it cannot be enforced.

And, I mean, the example I gave, you know, I tell my children, do something, and I go away for a week, I can't enforce it while I'm gone. But because they are Christians, they do what I say. They are concerned to be submitted to proper authority.

This is pleasing to God, and that's why Christians want to honor correct authority. Now, authority, of course, I've been given examples of authority as an exercise in giving commands. But there's also authority in terms of being able to settle disputes about what is truth.

If I have a problem with my car, and it's got a strange sound in it, and I frankly don't know very much about mechanics, I don't know very much about engines, and one of you comes up to me and says, Oh, I heard your car making that noise when you drove up, and I just want to tell you what you've got. You've got a bearing problem there. You've got a bad bearing in your back wheel, and it's pretty cheap, easy to fix.

I'll fix that for you. Then I've got an opinion as to what the truth is. There is something that is true.

There's something wrong with my car. I don't know yet what it is. Because reality has not yet been fully discovered by having an opinion over here.

Somebody has said it's a bad bearing. And somebody else, you know, I drive up to someone else's house, and he comes up and says, Boy, you've got a terrible sound in

your car. Do you know what that is? That's your whole rear end is about ready to fall out of your car.

Your whole differential is, you know, trashed. You know, you're going to have to replace that whole thing. Now, I've got two different opinions here.

Now, one of them may be true. They could even both be wrong. Maybe the truth lies in a third option, but they can't both be right.

You know, the truth lies somewhere, but the question is, how do I know what the truth is? Well, in many cases, I would make a determination simply by saying to the person who said that's a bad bearing, I'd say, Well, really, have you heard this problem before? Have you had some experience with this? I mean, what is your training in auto mechanics? Did you have this problem once with your car? I mean, how do you know? Now, if the person who says that it's a bad bearing is somebody who just, you know, he knew someone once who said that they had a bad bearing, it sounded something like that. And the guy who told me that I've got to get my whole differential, you know, replaced or whatever. He's a four star auto mechanic and, you know, specializes in that particular kind of car.

Probably I'm going to attribute the opinion of that person with the greater experience and training. I'm going to attribute more value, more authority to speak on the matter to this person than to that person. Right.

I mean, that is authority, too. This person has the right to determine by virtue of his intrinsic expertise. And he has more authority than this other person who doesn't have very much expertise.

It's so important to recognize the limits of expertise because authority, not all people who try to tell you what's true have the same authority. If somebody says, well, there is no God. And you say, well, who are you to tell me that there's no God? Well, I'm a world famous biologist.

Well, world famous biologist and you've got, what, four degrees or something like that, written 27 books and they're used as textbooks throughout the universities of the world. That sounds pretty authoritative, but is that authority to speak about God? You know, does the study of biology give you some kind of expertise on the subject of God? The simplest child who's met God has more authority than the greatest expert in biology who says there's no God to speak on the subject. If someone's met God, they know more about God than somebody who isn't.

You need to beware of being intimidated by pretended authority. Not everyone has the same expertise. Not everyone has the right to speak or the right to be listened to or the right to determine the question.

In other words, the authority to address a matter and to end all challenges on it. Now, what I'm suggesting, of course, in this series is that the Bible is the final authority on all matters of behavior and belief because my belief is that it's the word of God. I'm going to tell you why I believe it's the word of God.

I'm not just going to tell you that it is. I'm going to show you why I believe it's the word of God. I believe that by the time we're done, you'll have better reasons for believing that the Bible is the word of God than you have for believing even the place of your birth, whatever you believe about that.

I think you'll have better reasons for believing the Bible is the word of God than you'll have for believing almost anything you believe because there are excellent reasons. The only thing is most Christians aren't aware of the reasons and haven't given it much thought. But if the Bible is the word of God, God certainly is the most knowledgeable.

He's got more expertise on all subjects than anyone else. And if God addresses a topic and gives this information about it, and if this is what he said, that ends all disputes, does it not? I mean, he's the final authority. And that's why we're talking about the authority of Scripture the way we are.

But so much for the definition of authority. Let's go on to the definition of knowledge. What does knowledge mean? Well, that's fairly straightforward.

It's acquaintance with facts, according to the American College Dictionary. Truths. Now, we've got to get to this question of truths, but especially when people say there's no such thing as truth, there's no such thing as objective truth.

Well, certainly the dictionary definition assumes there is such a thing as truths and facts. I think people who deny that there is such a thing as truth often have their own private definition of truth. And they're thinking maybe in terms of ultimate personal experiential gobbledegook.

They're not thinking of a correct definition of truth. Truth is nothing else but another word for reality. What's truth? Some things are true, some things are not true.

Two plus two equals four. That's true. Two plus two equals three is not true.

Some things are true and some things are not true. There are facts, and there are opinions that are contrary to facts. That's all we mean.

I mean, is there such a thing as truth? If you stand on a railroad track in front of a steaming locomotive, screaming down the track at you, and you don't move off that track, reality is you're going to be squished like a bug. Now you might say, but I just don't believe there's absolute truth. I just don't believe that that train can kill me.

Well, you're believing it won't change anything. You'll still be dead as much as if you believed it with all your heart. Because what you think about truth does not determine what is true.

There is such a thing as reality. And your belief about reality is going to be more or less in conformity with what's true. The less so, the worse for you.

The more of the truth you apprehend and know, the better off you'll be. Now, knowledge simply means acquaintance with the facts. We're not talking about some kind of personal superiority.

Knowledge just means you know something to be factual. It's true. But what is the truth? That's a question Pilot asked Jesus.

What is truth? But he didn't stay around to get the answer. As soon as he asked what is truth, he turned from Jesus and walked out to the crowd and talked to them instead. So he never found out.

But the dictionary will tell you what truth is. Same dictionary, the American College dictionary, says truth is that which is true. The true are actual facts of a case.

How can anyone deny that there's such a thing as truth if all that truth means is what is true, as opposed to what isn't true? The facts of a case. Is anyone going to deny that there are facts of a case? Suppose you were a witness to an automobile accident, and you were called to testify in court and to tell the truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And you said, I'm sorry, I just don't believe there is such a thing as truth.

And they said, well, here, you sit over here and listen to the testimony of others. And, you know, you did see the accident, let us say, and you know that that Volkswagen ran the red light and hit the Cadillac in the side and so forth. You saw it happen, and you know it's truth, although you deny that truth exists.

And you hear someone give testimony that it was the other way around. It was the Cadillac that ran the red light and hit the Volkswagen. You sit there knowing, of course, that isn't true.

I'm acquainted with the facts of the case, and I know that that isn't true. Truth isn't just an infinitely malleable thing like silly putty that can be formed into any shape you want it to be. There are some things that are actually factual, and other things that simply are in contradiction to those facts.

And your belief system about any subject, including God, knowledge of God is in one sense not different than knowledge of anything else. God is a certain way, and he isn't some other way. Just like you're a certain way.

You may be a girl. If someone said you're a boy, they're wrong. They might prefer that you're a boy, but they're wrong if they think you're a boy, because you're not.

The fact is you're not a boy. God is a certain way, and people may wish to think of him a different way all they want to, but if the way they think about him is different than the actual facts of the case, then they don't have the truth. They're wrong.

And all beliefs on any subject, including religious subjects or spiritual subjects, every bit as much as beliefs about what we call secular subjects, all beliefs conform to a certain degree to the truth, either greater or lesser. And to some extent, they don't conform at all to the truth, and therefore they're very wrong. And so truth exists, and I don't know that I shouldn't probably have to harp on this with you, because you're Christians, I hope you know this, but you all come from a generation where you're going to always encounter people who question this.

And there is, of course, such a thing. Truth is that which is true. The true or actual facts of the case.

A second definition in the dictionary is conformity with the fact or reality. Another of the definitions there is agreement with a standard, a rule, or the like. If you're a musician and you play an instrument that has to be tuned, a guitar, a violin, or something like that, or a piano, it's important that your instrument is tuned true.

That G string has to be a true G. There are variations on that note that are not the right one. You can have it tuned flat or sharp, and you can call that a G if you want, but it isn't a G if it isn't in conformity to an absolute standard of G or A. A is what, 440? I don't know much about music, but I don't even know what 440 refers to. It has to do with some kind of... someone here can tell me someday.

But the fact of the matter is, the A note is 440. If your A string on your guitar or your piano is tuned to 450, you don't have a true A. It's not in conformity with the standard of what it is. Truth is conformity to a standard, as well as to being what is true.

Now, let's move along here. Why should any of this concern us? Some of you probably feel like, well, this is all very philosophical stuff. I've never really gotten interested in that philosophical stuff.

Just tell me how to live. I just want practical Christianity. Just tell me how to love my neighbor as myself, and let's not worry about all this stuff up here in the petty realm.

Well, I'm afraid we can't be that simplistic safely, because if somebody tells you, this is how you should live, and that's what a lot of people just say, don't give me the theology, just give me the practical stuff. The practical means, tell me what I'm supposed to do. Well, the problem is you're going to have a whole bunch of people telling you what you're supposed to do, and they're not all going to agree.

Your issue is going to be who is speaking with authority. Who is telling me really what I'm supposed to do, and who has got a different opinion about it, and they're wrong. This is where we have to think a little more than is comfortable.

Some of us find it very comfortable. I just love to think like this, and you can probably tell that I enjoy it. But some people don't, and I don't hold that against them.

Not everyone finds everything enjoyable. Not everyone likes quiche, and tastes are tastes. But if you don't have a taste for hard thinking, then we won't require you to do as much as someone who does like to do it.

But you need to do some. You need to know, this person who's told me that when the nation declares war, I should go and fight in the war, or this person who told me I shouldn't go and fight in the war because it's not a Christian thing to do, who is speaking with authority? I mean, we've got two opposite opinions, and this is a life decision. This is ethics.

This is practical stuff. The nation's at war, it may be. I've received a draft notice, it may be.

Of course, it's not happening right now in America, but when I was a youth, that was the case. There was a draft. Could happen again.

Here, nowadays, if they reinstitute the draft, you girls will probably be drafted to combat duty too, the way things have developed. But, you know, you get a draft notice. And someone over here, some pastor says, Oh, you've got to be a patriot, you're supposed to fulfill the laws of the country, and you've got to go out and fight for your country for Jesus.

Another person over here, maybe the Mennonite, says, No, Christians should never fight in war. Now, you've got a decision to make. Who's right? How do you know? Unless you're willing to do some hard thinking, as well as praying.

Now, I'm not saying that thinking should be done in a spiritual vacuum. You don't do it without praying and seeking God and waiting on God. But you've got to think, you've got to know, that the choice you make conforms to the truth taught in the Scripture.

Because if it isn't, then you're making a wrong decision. You may be sinning. If the Scripture says you should go out and fight, and you say, No, I'm a pastor, so I won't go fight.

You may be sinning by being a pastor. If the Scripture, however, supports pacifism, and you say, Well, I think I should be a patriot and go out and fight. Well, you may be sinning by doing that.

Sinning is not something Christians should be open to. Sinning is the one thing we're determined not to do. But knowing what sin is and what righteousness is requires that we have an awareness of where the authority is to answer such questions.

And that's why the person who decides he doesn't really want to do a lot of serious thinking is going to be in a moral swamp, an ethical swamp. You can't know what to do unless you know who has the authority to say, and what it is they said, and what it means, and so forth. There's some thinking that is required.

I will try not to demand more of you in that area than is appropriate, but I'm going to ask you to do some thinking. Let me tell you why knowing the truth is extremely important. Biblically, I find four reasons.

They're in your notes under Roman numeral two, the value of knowing the truth. Biblically, it's the one possession that must never be sold for any price. There's a little statement there by Solomon in Proverbs 23, 23, where he says quite succinctly and plainly, buy the truth and do not sell it.

Also, wisdom and instruction and understanding. All of those, of course, are servants of truth. Wisdom and instruction and understanding are means of arriving at the truth.

But the issue here is, buy the truth and do not sell it. Now, I know of one ministry that won't sell their publications because it says, do not sell the truth. And they figured their publications are the truth, so you shouldn't sell it.

But it's okay. We don't sell our publications either, but we don't justify it by use of this verse. This verse is not saying that.

There may be very good reasons not to sell religious literature and to give it away, but that's not what this verse is talking about. What this is saying is, truth, the truth, whatever that may be, get it. Buy it at whatever price necessary.

It's figurative. Just like when Jesus in Revelation said, I counsel you to buy from me gold and white garments that you're nakedness, you'll not be found naked, and buy eye salve for your eyes that you won't be blind. He's not really selling anything.

But what he's saying is there's a price to be paid to obtain it. It's not that you go to church and give a certain amount of money and you come out of it with eye salve and with white garments. When he says, buy this from me, he means you need to obtain it at a cost.

There will always be a cost for anything of value. Jesus didn't acquire salvation without cost to himself, and we don't obtain it without cost to ourselves. It's a gift that you can't have unless you forsake all that you have, the Bible says.

There is a cost. You've got to count the cost, the Bible says. Jesus said that before he became a disciple.

Now, that being so, when Solomon says, buy the truth, he just means obtain it at a cost. Now, it's interesting he doesn't say how much it costs. And the reason is because the force of his statement is, buy it no matter what it costs.

Just make sure you get it. And once you've got it, don't sell it. Don't trade it in on anything.

And there are many people who are somewhat interested in the truth, but they'd trade it for something. A lot of the so-called hippies who said they were searching for truth eventually traded it for something else. When they heard the gospel and they heard that that challenged their lifestyle.

I mean, they wanted truth in the abstract, but they didn't want a truth that meant they had to give up their free love and their drugs. And when it came to the real truth of Jesus Christ, the real truth of what God demands of them, many of them were converted and many were not. The ones who were not still professed to be interested in truth, but it's quite clear they traded truth for something else.

They were willing to sell it for, really, like Esau, a bowl of pottage, really. Temporary pleasure. Temporary satisfaction instead of truth.

But Solomon advises don't get rid of it and give everything you need to, whatever it costs, to get it. Now, what will it cost you to get the truth? Well, sometimes it will cost you popularity, certainly. It may cost you respectability if the truth lies in some unpopular theory.

I mean, if you are a college professor and you don't believe in evolution because you think the truth lies elsewhere, you're going to be ostracized. There will be ramifications in the way you're promoted or not promoted in the institution. To hold to the truth can be costly.

You may lose your parents' respect if they're not Christians. Or, sad to say, even if people are Christians, they may be more committed to the belief system of their denomination than they are to the truth. And if you discover in the Scripture something to be true and the denomination says otherwise, you may lose their acceptance.

Acceptance is something that is often at risk when you pursue truth. Someone said knowledge, I don't know who said this, someone said knowledge divides people. I'm not sure in what sense I agree with that or disagree with that statement, but I will say this, I've noticed this, that the more I study the Scripture and the more I draw from them and from them alone what I consider to be truth, the more I find myself divided, not by choice, but sometimes by the choice of the others, from other Christians who don't, first

of all, they don't agree with that, but that's okay.

I mean, a lot of Christians I don't agree with, I can still fellowship with, no problem with that. But they don't feel comfortable fellowshipping with someone who doesn't agree with them. And the fact that they don't tells me that they're a little insecure about whether what they have is the truth or not.

You see, the philosophy that undergirds almost everything in my ministry came not out of the Bible, but off of bubble gum wrappers. I'm not joking, this happened when I was about ten years old. I got one of those bazooka bubble gum things and they have a comic in them, and they have a little fortune, like from a fortune cookie or something under the comic, you ever seen those? Of course not, you don't do that.

But when I was a kid, I got one of those, and there was like the little fortune, I think they call it at the bottom, sort of a witty saying or something sometimes. It said, the truth will always have the best argument. And I thought about that as a kid, and I thought, well that's certainly true.

Threw away the wrapper, but I didn't throw away the concept. I still believe it to this day. I've lived 35 years since I read that, and I have never found any reason to discard that as a fact.

The truth will always have the best argument. Now the person who has the truth won't always know the best arguments for his position. If you get a Christian and a Jehovah's Witness into an argument, it's possible that the Jehovah's Witness can argue that Christian into a corner if the Jehovah's Witness is adept at presenting his arguments, and the Christian is not adept at his.

But whoever knows the best arguments for the Jehovah's Witness position, pitted against he who knows the best arguments for the Christian position, when the best arguments are displayed, they will always be on the side of whatever is true. How could it be otherwise? How could what is not true have valid arguments in his favor? It's clear that whatever really is true will have all the facts conforming to it, and evidence is nothing but awareness of the facts and processing them appropriately. And the truth will always have the best arguments, and for that reason I have decided, I don't know if I decided it or God decided it for me, I don't know if this is sovereignly birthed in me by God or something, I don't remember making a particular decision, but for as long as I can remember, nothing has mattered to me so much as the truth.

I mean, I have drifted, by my study of the Scriptures, I have drifted from the traditions of my early Christian upbringing in so many areas. If you've listened to me on the radio or whatever, you know I've got really different views about some things than what are more popular views in the Church. I just want to clarify something.

This has not happened to me as a result of saying I need to find some niche for myself in the world of Christian philosophy. I need to have some distinctives or else I'll just blend in into the faceless masses of preachers in the world. I've got to make a mark for myself in history.

I've got to have some kind of weird ideas that will set me apart from everyone else and give me a name. I couldn't care less about that. I'll tell you what motivates me.

If I could, I would say the most bland, universally agreed on things available. You know why? Because I like to be liked. I like to be accepted.

I'm a human being. I would like it if all Christians thought I was the great champion of their truth. But I'm not.

Of their truth. I can only be the champion of what truth I find in Scripture because many people think of truth as something which they've just picked up from their denomination or from tradition or something else. And so do I, I'm sure.

I'm not here saying I know absolute truth. I don't and I doubt if I ever will. But what I'm saying is my life is a pursuit of the truth and I know where to look for it because I have discovered where the final authority on these matters is.

And that is what I will listen to even if it's in conflict with all my friends, which fortunately it isn't, but it certainly has been in conflict with many of the things I was taught and that religious people sometimes think. But the concern I have is not that I'd be the most widely accepted teacher in the body of Christ or have the biggest church or anything like that. That's never been one of the things that could motivate me.

It motivates some people, no doubt. But my concern is that when I stand before God, I can say with certainty and with clarity and with honesty that I pursued the truth as best I could discover it from the best authority God has given me, which is His Word. And I am willing to sacrifice anything for the truth.

Anything. Now some people think that's not really very good because, I mean, maybe we should sacrifice everything for God but not for some abstract concept like truth. But Jesus said, I am the truth.

I'm convinced that the truth will always have the best arguments and that a person will never be led astray by a continual honest assessment of the best arguments that he can find for any proposition. If I was raised believing a certain thing about the Trinity and someone comes to me with a different opinion about the Trinity and the scriptural support he has is actually better than the scriptural support I have, I should reconsider. Now that's an example that I really haven't changed.

I do hold a Trinitarian view. But I often hear people presenting what they consider to be

scriptural evidence for something else. If their evidence was in fact more scriptural than mine, I would move from it.

But you know if I did, you know what I'd be called after that? A heretic, right? I mean if I decide I don't believe in the Trinity anymore, I could worry about it, might as well just stamp it on my head, heretic. And that would not go over real well in the Christian community. But where I'm at is if someone can show me that the biblical evidence lies more in favor of something other than the belief in the Trinity, I will go there even if that stamps me as a heretic.

Fortunately, my studies in scripture have never taken me into anything that is truly regarded as heretical, but sometimes some unusual understanding of things have I've reluctantly allowed myself to embrace because I couldn't find any scriptural way around them. You need to buy the truth at whatever cost. I remember there's a Jewish comedian, I don't know, he's like a humorous writer.

I don't even remember his name. Most of his jokes are almost like the far side. It's like one-liners, just witty sayings and so forth.

One of his books I remember seeing when we lived in Bandon at a bookstore. He's not a Christian. The book was called I've Given Up My Search for the Truth and Now I'm Looking for a Satisfying Fantasy or something like that.

And I assume since they made that the title of his humorous book that that was supposed to be humorous. It is kind of humorous, but it's kind of tragic too. And it's really, what makes it not so humorous is because it's so true of what most people are doing.

Most people aren't the least bit interested in the truth. What they want is a comfortable fantasy. They want to believe something that makes them comfortable the way they are.

They don't want something challenging them every time they turn around and saying you've got to change your behavior, change your thinking. But that's exactly what the pursuit of the truth involves. And you've got to decide, is it worth the cost? Am I going to buy the truth or am I going to sell it off for something else? A little bit of comfort over here in deception.

A little bit of comfort in ignorance. Well, biblically the choice is made for us. Solomon says buy the truth and don't sell it.

Truth, secondly, is the key to personal freedom. It is the means of being free. We have Jesus' authority, no less than that, on this point.

In John chapter 8, many people quote this verse without knowing even what he was talking about. Even non-Christians quote this verse without knowing what it means. But

Jesus said in verse 32 of John chapter 8, you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.

Now what a lot of people don't understand is that that is part of a statement that began in the previous verse, John 8, 31, which says, Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. There's not some kind of a promise that everyone will know the truth, but those who continue in his word, those who are his genuine disciples, they are promised the truth will be theirs, they will know it. And when they know it, it will set them free.

Now, again, even what freedom means here has been misunderstood by many. He goes on to explain it, because even the Jews misunderstood him. In verse 33, they answered him, We're Abraham's seed, we've never been in bondage to anyone.

How do you say that we should be made free? And Jesus answered them, Verily I say to you, Whoever commits sin is the slave of sin. Well, that's the kind of freedom, freedom from the slavery of sin he's talking about. Now, if you're a slave of sin, you're not free.

If you're a slave of sin, you're a slave of self. That might sound like a good thing. People like to be self-employed, rather than under someone else.

But a slave of self will simply keep you in bondage to sin, in bondage to habits and behaviors and lies that will keep you from God. And anyone who's really a Christian has already made up their mind, they want not to be separated from God. They want to be close to God.

That's why they became Christians. And so the truth frees you. The degree to which you know the truth is the degree to which you are free.

The degree to which you are deceived is the degree to which you're not really free. If you have wrong opinions about something, they will inhibit your life in any dealings in that particular category. Because you don't know what's true.

If you don't know what's true, you can't operate in that room. You walk around in the dark. You might fall into a pit.

You might bump into something, break your nose. If you can't see, if you don't know what it is that in the realm you're in, you're in grave danger. And therefore it inhibits your movement.

If you're sitting at this front table and after class you want to walk out that door, when the class is over you'll just walk through the door quite confidently. You might even be able to run through the room and get there. But if it was totally dark in here, and you weren't sure if there were tables in the room or not, because you can't see them, you

don't know what's really reality in here right now.

But you want to get to that door anyway. And you think the door is over in that direction somewhere. You may eventually find it.

You might not. But you'd certainly be inhibited. You'd certainly be slow about it.

You'd be feeling your way around in the dark, making sure you don't trip over things. I mean, you are less free. Your movement is less free.

Your life is more inhibited, more in bondage, as you don't know reality. If you know what reality is, you can operate quite freely and comfortably within its framework. And the truth will make you free.

Another scripture that essentially makes the same point is found in 2 Timothy 2, verses 25 and 26. Paul said that the servant of the Lord must teach people patiently in meekness, instructing those who are in opposition, if God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who have been taken captive by him to do his will. Now, people are ensnared and trapped and captive, it says, to the devil.

That's not free. But it says, God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. Once they acknowledge the truth, then they can recover themselves from the captivity and the snare of the devil.

It is the truth that makes you free. Certainly, that alone is good enough reason to seek the truth. But there's more, scripturally.

The truth, the Bible indicates, does not present itself to those who do not love it and who will not search for it wholeheartedly. Sometimes you might think that, well, if you just kind of stumble through and think kind of lazily and just pick up a little here and a little there, you'll eventually come to the knowledge of the truth. The Bible does not support that notion.

Because the truth is such a precious thing. You don't get it without valuing it. You don't get it without treasuring it.

You don't get it without searching for it. That's what the Bible says. Look at Proverbs chapter 2. I know that in your notes, the scripture is given in a different order, but I'll take charge here.

Proverbs chapter 2, the opening verses of that chapter. I told you I was using the New King James. I just realized that I accidentally picked up the King James.

That's why it is reading differently. Normally, I'll have my New King James here. So if you're reading New King James and says, hey, that's not what it says, it's similar.

Proverbs 2 says, My son, if you will receive my words and hide my commandments with you, so that you incline your ear unto wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. Yes, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek for her as for silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and you'll find the knowledge of God. It sounds like it's not all that easy to stumble across.

You've got to cry out for it. You've got to incline your heart to it. You've got to seek for it as for silver and search for it as you would for a hidden treasure.

It doesn't just fall into your lap. You've got to have a heart for it. You've got to have a heart after it.

You've got to love it. You've got to treasure it. And if you treasure something more than you treasure it, you're not worthy of it.

I'll show you what Jeremiah said over in Jeremiah chapter 5 on this same thought, not the need to be pursuing the truth. It says in Jeremiah 5, 1, Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places of it, if you can find a man, if there is any, that executes justice and that seeks the truth, then I'll pardon the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah wrote at a time when the city was in danger of being overrun by the Babylonians.

Terrible judgment did come upon them. And God was saying, well, I could pardon the city if you could find even a man who seeks the truth here. Someone who's got a passion for truth more than a passion for self-gratification.

That's what Jerusalem lacked, and for lack of it, they were not pardoned. In the New Testament, we have a very kind of scary thing that Paul says on this point. In 2 Thessalonians, not too scary if you love the truth, but it should be scary to people who don't, I would think.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 9 through 12, Paul speaks about the man of sin, it says, even him, 2 Thessalonians 2, 9 through 12, he comes after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness, or deception, of unrighteousness in them that perish, because, note this, they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, so that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Wow.

Here's people, can you imagine God deceiving people? Can you imagine God sending a strong delusion to someone? I thought God wanted people to know the truth, I thought God wanted people saved. Well, He does, but He doesn't want people saved if they don't want to be saved. He doesn't want people to be saved against their will.

He doesn't want to give people saving truth if they don't love it. They're not worthy of it. If you love something more than you love the truth, you're simply not worthy of knowing it.

And if you don't seek it, if you don't search for it as for hid treasure, if you don't receive the love of the truth, then God is offended. Offended enough to say, OK, you don't want the truth, I'll send you a lie. I'll send you the man of sin, he'll deceive you, and you'll die.

Because you didn't receive the love of the truth. It's not a small matter. Truth is more important than many people think, and certainly it's an insult to God, who is truth, that people take it casually.

And think maybe, well, somebody may not be interested in knowing what's true, maybe I'll find it by accident. Not likely. Finally, on this one point of knowing the value of the truth, the Bible indicates that those who do not love the truth are under God's wrath and invite to themselves a damning delusion.

We just read 2 Thessalonians, which makes that point. We have another very well-known scripture that says the same thing in Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1 is a picture of the decline of a civilization that chooses not to know God. And at several points in the description of that downward spiral, Paul says, therefore God gave them over.

God gave them up. Finally, he gave them up to a reprobate mind, which means they have no power to make the choices between right and wrong, to know the truth. Eventually, the people in this spiral reach a nadir, a low point, which is so that God, in judgment, gives them a reprobate mind, it says.

We won't look at the whole chapter, but where does that begin? Where is that decline entered upon? Where is the door that enters that spiral staircase that leads down to a reprobate mind? Well, it mentions it right at the very beginning of the paragraph, Romans 1.18, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness. Just like the ones we read of in 2 Thessalonians a moment ago. They had pleasure in unrighteousness.

They didn't receive the love of the truth. Same thing here. These people suppress the truth in their unrighteousness.

They prefer unrighteousness. Truth would condemn their unrighteousness. They don't like that.

They're going to make a choice. Is it going to be my unrighteousness or the truth? What am I going to embrace? Well, some people make the wrong choice. They choose unrighteousness.

It's more pleasurable to them. But to do so requires that they suppress the truth. Act like it isn't there.

Try to silence it. Try to ignore it. This is where it says the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against such people.

And it is revealed in the fact that by stages he gives them over to their own ways, to their own lusts. Finally, he gives them over to a reprobate mind. And they can't be saved after that.

They're given a strong delusion and they're stuck with it. That is... I mean, this gives you some idea of how passionate God is about taking truth seriously. It's not a light matter.

Now, we're not going to be able to take this whole sheet probably in this class, but let me move a little further on down through the notes here. All knowledge of the truth, or let's just say all knowledge and opinion about the truth, rests upon faith in some authority. Now, this is something that is true, but some people haven't really thought about it.

Once you think about it, you'll see it's correct. Why do you believe any particular thing to be true? Well, there's some authority you're trusting. Now, if you think of an authority as necessarily a person, like a teacher or a parent or something like that, then this wouldn't necessarily be true, because not everything you know do you get from other people.

But there are still... there is some witness that you have received as authoritative. For example, is the sun shining today, or is it cloudy out? I would say it's not cloudy out. It's sunny outside.

I know this to be true. How do I know this? Well, my eyes have told me this. I just saw it.

Is this trusting in some authority? Of course. Of course. If I believe my eyes, it means that I have decided that my eyes are a trustworthy witness.

Now, are my eyes always a trustworthy witness? Not really. Have you ever seen a magician do a sleight of hand quicker than the eye? Your eyes can be deceived, but I don't think they've been deceived in this case. I attribute a certain degree of authority to the witness of my vision.

I attribute a certain amount of authority to my experience. Now, I also attribute a certain amount of authority to people. But an authority, you know, when I say all of our knowledge of reality is based on faith in some authority, it doesn't mean always a human authority.

It could be the authority that I attribute to the witness of my vision, or of my opinion even. I might just be very opinionated and think I know because I think it. Because I think

it makes it good enough for me because I'm me, and certainly I couldn't be wrong.

That's attributing a great deal of authority to my own opinion. But it is attributing some authority. You would not know anything unless you accepted the witness of something that you count to be authoritative.

That's why some people say, well, I won't believe in anything I can't see. I can't believe in God because I just can't believe anything I can't see. Well, okay, I mean, they can do that if they want to.

It's not right. But what's the mistake they're making here? They're assuming that the witness of my eyesight is the final authority. And they will believe that as the highest authority in their thinking.

That will settle the question for them. That will be the determining witness, what I see. Now someone says, well, but, you know, I trust my eyesight to a certain degree.

I do attribute some authority to the witness of my eyesight about things that my eyes can really testify to, like visible things. But I don't know at the outset that there's no such thing as invisible things. And if there are invisible things, I have to trust some other authority on that than my eyes.

Because my eyes would be authoritative in looking at things that are visible. But if there's some invisible reality, I'm going to have to have some other authority on that. But whatever I may think about anything, I accept on authority.

How many of you have been to Papua New Guinea? Only one. How many of you believe there is such a place? Why? Why would you believe such a thing as that? Have you seen Papua New Guinea? I haven't. Have you seen anything even like Papua New Guinea? I have not.

I've been in the third world, but I've never seen anything like Papua New Guinea. Someone here has, but most of you have not, but that hasn't changed the fact that you believe in it. Well, why do you believe in it? You accept the authority of something.

What is that something? Well, maybe you've looked at a map, and you can look at that map over there, and you can find Papua New Guinea. But that map isn't Papua New Guinea. That little coloured thing on the paper isn't Papua New Guinea.

And that map could have omitted that little island there. And that wouldn't change the fact of whether Papua New Guinea exists or not. The map is not the reality.

It is a witness to a certain reality. Is it not? I mean, that map tells you that there is a place called Russia, and there's a place near there adjacent to it called China. But if you haven't been there, you don't know that to be true unless you accept the testimony of

the map.

Or, let's say, of all the maps. I mean, they're all pretty agreeable about this. The modern ones, anyway.

But what I'm saying is, what you know about geographical areas that you've never visited, you know by accepting the authority of whoever made that map. You figure they know. I haven't been there, but someone must have been there.

I haven't measured the distance, you know, from here to there, but someone must have, because they put it on the map. You assume that somebody knows something you don't know. Because they have more authority.

They've studied it. They've had experience that goes beyond yours, and you accept their testimony, because you attribute a certain authority to them to speak on the subject. And that's right to do.

Now, of course, the Bible tells us that we can't always trust people, and it would be very possible. Ancient mapmakers had a really different view of the way the continents were, and so forth. And you can look in some old books and see how wrong they were about things.

Now, people trusted those maps, too. Sadly, because they were trusting the authority of man, and the man who made those maps didn't know as much as we know now. Trusting in man can deceive you.

But even though trusting in man can be misleading, we cannot live without trusting some people at some level. I certainly wouldn't want to trust man for information that had to do with my eternal soul, if I had access to someone of a higher authority than man, like God. If God has said something about what constitutes salvation, and some guru over here who doesn't know God has given me some opinions about the same thing, my conclusions about what I think constitutes salvation is going to depend on which authority I trust more.

I have more faith in this authority than in that authority, and that's why I form my opinion. It's true of everything. Do you believe there are atoms? No one's ever seen an atom.

Even scientists have never seen atoms. They're too small. But we all believe they exist, do we not? Maybe someone here doubts it, but I don't.

I believe in atoms. I've never seen them. No one's ever seen them.

Well, how in the world could I believe in them, then? Well, in ways totally beyond my ken, totally beyond my ability to fathom, there have been experiments done by people

who are a lot smarter than me about these kinds of things, and who have devoted a great deal of time and a lot of money and research grants and so forth, and have this technology that I don't even know about, and they have apparently proven that atoms exist. Now, I will tell you this. I don't have as much confidence in atoms as I have in Papua New Guinea, because people have seen Papua New Guinea, and I assume that atoms are part of something called atomic theory, and probably the best theory going right now.

Maybe someday they'll prove something else. I don't know. I'm kind of ignorant about that kind of stuff.

But if someone were to ask me, do you believe in atoms, I'd have to say, well, yes, I do. I wouldn't stake my life on it. But I have no reason to doubt it, and the people that tell me that there are atoms, because I assume they have a certain authority to speak on this subject.

They've done more research than I have, and they have ways of knowing that I haven't availed myself of. Therefore, I accept their authority on it. Now, what would happen if I didn't accept authority? What if I decided no one has any authority? I don't trust anybody.

Well, then I'd be very limited in my life. I wouldn't be able to know anything beyond what I've seen for myself. But then I shouldn't even trust my eyes, because, you know, why should I trust the authority of my eyes more than, say, the authority of someone else's eyes, who's seen Papa in the beginning? If I didn't trust authority, I couldn't know anything.

And insofar as I know anything, I know it because I trust or have faith in a certain authority on that subject. It might be the authority of my own expertise. And I trust it because I have this experience.

I've done this. I've studied this. I have expertise.

I trust my opinion about this because of the whole complex of ways that the information has come to me. It might be the authority of law. Is it right to commit adultery? Well, how could I know? How could I possibly know? Well, there's a law that says you shall not commit adultery.

Well, then I guess that tells me that adultery is wrong. If I hadn't the authority of the law, if I didn't believe that law, I might come to a very different conclusion. My own feelings about it might be any number of feelings on the subject, but the law defines it.

There's an authority there. And therefore I know what's right and wrong because there's an authority of law from an authoritative lawgiver in this case. There's the authority of reason, of course.

How do I know that 2 plus 2 equals 4? Well, partly because I memorized that when I was a kid, but if I had never memorized it, I could have figured it out probably before I reached my present age. 2 plus 2, it's not too hard to figure out. I can reason that one out.

I can prove it to myself. Just rational power. And lots of things we know.

We know because it's reasonable. We've figured it out. And that's not wrong.

I mean, some things can be known that way. There's a certain authority to reason. Now, a lot of things people believe or think they believe, they base on the authority of preference.

Now, as far as I'm concerned, preference is no authority at all. But I list it because I think an awful lot of the things you believe, some things you believe because you trust the expertise of somebody who knows more than you. Some things you believe because the law says this is right and wrong and therefore you agree with it.

Some things you believe from your own reason. You figured them out yourself. But an awful lot of things, probably the majority of things that lazy-minded people believe, they believe because they prefer to.

They believe what they want to believe. Now, this is, of course, an extremely unreliable authority. But if people have strong convictions about things that they prefer, in many cases, they have no better authority for it than the authority of my preference.

And, you know, I attribute to my own sentiment, to my own preferences, to my own opinions, what I want to be true. I'm just going to say that that is true. I'm going to believe what I want to believe.

When you believe what you want to believe, basically what you're saying is my preference, there's something in me called preference, is the final authority on this matter. That's obviously a very irrational and stupid thing to do, but many people do this without knowing they're doing it. You can show them all the facts that really are authoritative, and if it really isn't what they want to believe, for the most part, many people simply choose to believe something else.

Why? What authority do they believe? Just their own. But that is something that human nature does quite a bit. It's not a valid authority, and that gets us to the point that we'll be making after the break in the next lecture, that not all authority is equal.

And if you believe in authority that's not very authoritative, and reject an authority that is really authoritative, it's not going to be any advantage to you that you believed in authority. You have to believe the right authority, and that's what eventually will bring us down to our consideration of the authority of scripture. At this point, though, I owe you a

break.

We'll take about a half-hour break, and come back and we'll finish up with these notes.