
JOHN 1:14 : GOD'S SUPREME REVELATION [8]

... full of grace and truth. [2]

No. EE113

We have seen that the Word, that is God the Son, came to mankind as God's supreme and ultimate self-revelation. And what is the essence of what He came to show us? *He is full of grace and truth!*

We have seen that John probably alludes to the Old Testament word-pair, *chesed* and *emeth*, used over and over to describe God. In the light of this we then looked at the first of these two concepts and saw that God's *chesed* is his *merciful covenant love*.

What then does his "truth", his *emeth*, stand for?

"TRUTH" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Hb. *emeth*)

In Greek thought, truth (Gr. *aletheia*) was an intellectual quality indicating realness as opposed to falseness, unrealness or mere illusion. The Hebrew concept of truth contained in the word *emeth* is, however, much richer.

It certainly includes the Greek meaning of the factual. For instance, in a Jewish court it was of cardinal importance to establish *the truth (emeth)* before judgement could be pronounced (Dt 13:14; 22:20; etc.).

Mostly, however, the word had a moral tone to it, namely that of *integrity, dependability, loyalty*. Hence it could be used with reference to a witness, a friend, a slave, or a husband. Someone who acted with *emeth*, was a person who could be trusted. He was honest and loyal, you could depend on him (Gn 24:49; 42:16; Jos 2:14). The word of an *emeth*

witness was totally trustworthy (Pr 14:25), you could accept as the truth anything he said.

The Old Testament uses the word over and over again to describe the Lord. He can be trusted. His conduct is never unpredictable. His actions are always in harmony with his character and his promises. One can depend on Him completely. His resolves are firmer than a mountain.

"Emeth" speaks of God's total integrity. He keeps his word; you can depend fully on it. He is a God of covenant loyalty!

"TRUTH" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (Gr. *aletheia*)

We must look at the Lord Jesus, John tells us, if we want to see what God's essential nature is. He did, after all, come to this earth as God's self-revelation. And what do we see if we look carefully? We see his covenant love (considered in our previous discussion). And we see, in the second instance, God's "truth" - His absolute integrity, dependability and trustworthiness. *We see His covenant loyalty!*

Now we can understand why John repeatedly uses the concept of "truth". His Main Character is Jesus Christ - and how can he talk about Him without continually referring to God's covenant faithfulness as revealed in Him? In Him we see who and what God is like. Listen to the words of John: He is "the true light" (1:9); He is "the true bread from heaven" (6:32). And listen to the Lord Jesus Himself: "I am the way and the truth and the life" (14:6). "I am the true vine" (15:1).

Indeed, when we talk of these things we stand on holy ground! And the more clearly we see these attributes of God, the more they fascinate us. And the more we are touched by it, the more we grow to love Him. The Bible truly addresses an incredibly wide range of matters, but you gradually read everything in the light of these vital attributes of God. Sermons without this at heart simply do not satisfy you anymore. And when you yourself are a preacher, this is what you want to preach more than anything else - in a thousand different ways, over

and over. This was also the experience of the apostles. That is why Paul said that he wanted to preach nothing except Jesus Christ (1Cor 2:2).

Should this come as a surprise? Certainly not! When we concern ourselves with God's *merciful grace* and *covenant faithfulness* we are really at the heart of who and what He is. And does the essence of our sanctification not evolve around searching for an ever-deepening knowledge of God? And is this not the essence of life everlasting (Jn 17:3)?

GOD HAS PLEASURE IN EXERCISING HIS COVENANT LOVE AND LOYALTY

Every one of us has a personality and gifts that we simply have to satisfy and express. Writers write, mothers hug their babies, boys climb trees.

We should take the shoes off our feet when we ponder these things, but we can truly say, according to His Word, that God also has an essential nature, unique to Himself, which He must express.

The Son's advent in merciful grace and covenant faithfulness was one such expression of His essential nature. And the ongoing working out of the implications thereof - through the centuries and to eternity - is a continuation of it. With respect, God cannot help but act in covenant love and faithfulness. Nothing is more characteristic of his nature. Nothing gives Him more pleasure and fulfilment. And never is it expressed more gloriously than in Christ's mission of salvation and his ongoing work of redemption.

And why does the expression of these attributes please God? Because it glorifies Him like nothing else. And the glorification of God is what His eternal plan is all about.

This should not mislead us into ignoring the austere side of God's character. There are many instances in the Bible where God released the curse of his covenant over his people due to their persistent sinning. But this too is *covenant faithfulness and grace*, because it is aimed at the conversion and ultimately the salvation of his people.

A FEW POINTS OF APPLICATION

1. God has pleasure in the care and preservation of those to whom He shows grace - by realising his promises in their lives.

This follows necessarily from what we have seen above. Herein lies the most wonderful comfort for us, his children. By calling on the Name of the Lord in times of hardship we are neither troublesome nor intrusive, because in doing so we are simply taking his promises and self-revelation at face value. Only too often we are too hesitant about trusting the Lord because we feel that we do not deserve His kindness. But if the Lord's covenant faithfulness had to be dependent on our merit, not one of us would have qualified for the tiniest morsel from Him. Too easily we think that we might bother Him with trivialities. But to the Almighty it is totally irrelevant whether a problem is large or small. What is important to Him is the true disposition of our hearts.

Therefore the only thing that really matters to our Father is that we worship, love, trust and obey Him. That is the essence of what He demands from us. And those whose lives are governed by this, do experience again and again his love, His benevolence, His care and His faithfulness.

Let us never grow tired of reminding one another of these things: *It pleases our heavenly Father when, on the strength of his Son's merit, we drink again and again from the fountains of his salvation. He is, after all, a God of merciful grace and covenant faithfulness.*

Now we can probably understand better than ever why the Lord insists so uncompromisingly that our salvation, from A to Z, must come from Him, devoid of any human merit whatsoever.

Furthermore, do you now understand that anxiety about the future, worries over your future care, and fear of death are votes of no confidence in the Lord? It is to question the self-revelation of God in Christ. At the very least it shows lack of faith and trust.

Surely, all of us have much to confess in this

regard! Let us humble ourselves before the Lord!

2 The deeper the truth about God's covenant faithfulness anchors itself in our hearts, the more it sets us free.

If we keep in mind what we have discovered in the foregoing, Jn 8:31-32 becomes all the more fascinating. The Lord Jesus says, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." In both cases "truth" is the translation of the word at which we are looking (Gr. *aletheia*, covenant faithfulness).

To stay faithful to the Lord's words is to obey Him. This in turn leads to an ever increasing experience of his covenant faithfulness. And to the extent that we experience his covenant faithfulness, to that extent we are freed from all kinds of fear and the hold this world has on us. So we grow in our realisation that we can totally depend on Him.

Many preachers think that it is necessary to preach do's and don'ts to their flock in order to make them grow in holiness. The very opposite is true! Nothing has the same uplifting effects as God-centred and Christ-focussed preaching. Nothing makes Christians grow as much as preaching that rejoices in God's great deeds of salvation in Christ. Nothing leads to such steadfastness, because this is what feeds our faith.

That is how the apostle Paul closes off the first half of the letter to the Romans, that wonderful portion that talks about God's salvation in Christ like no other part in Scripture: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen" (Rm 11:36). Only then he continues to set out our responsibilities as Christians - in the light of God's mercy (Rm 12:1-2).

Zechariah 8:3 is a wonderful verse. When God returns to Zion in order to dwell in the midst of his people, Jerusalem will be called "the City of Truth" (Hb. *emeth*).

3. If our Father is called a God of covenant

faithfulness, we have an inescapable responsibility to be people of faithfulness ourselves.

In the first place it should characterise our relationship with our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Israelites were called upon many times to live in covenant faithfulness. People who fear God are people with *emeth* (Ex 18:21; Neh 7:2). In Jos 24:14 the Lord makes this appeal to the nation that has just settled in the Promised Land: "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness (Hb *emeth*)".

In the second place we have the inescapable responsibility to live with our neighbour in an *alatheia* relationship. Let us therefore be steadfast and trustworthy. Let us be people who can be depended upon, people of unwavering integrity, people whose "yes" does in fact mean "yes", and whose "no" is a definite "no".

A PRAYER EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD OFTEN PRAY

Oh Lord, make your church to an ever increasing extent a city of truth (Zech 8:3) - people who live in unwavering integrity before You and in their relationship with others, people who live lives that are faithful to their confession, people of covenant faithfulness.

And, dear Lord, start your word in me!

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