

Truth & Error

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the dangers of error and the importance of spiritual knowledge and the word of God in avoiding error and learning truth.

Scripture: Proverbs 14:12, Jeremiah 2:37, 2 Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 6:17, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Peter 4:11, 2 Peter 2:1, 2 Peter 3:17, Jude 1:3

Topics: "Biblical Truth", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the dangers of evil and error, both originating from Satan and leading to destruction. While evil acts are more visibly condemned, error on fundamental doctrines is more perilous as it often leads to eternal ruin. Philpot distinguishes between involuntary error, influenced by upbringing or temporary deception, and voluntary error, where individuals knowingly embrace falsehood. He emphasizes the importance of contending for the truth and denouncing error, drawing from biblical examples of strong rebukes against false teachings.

Transcript

Truth & Error

by J. C. Philpot

There are two things which every child of God has the greatest reason to dread--the one is evil--the other is error. Both are originally from Satan; both have a congenial home in the human mind; both are in their nature deadly and destructive; both have slain their thousands and tens of thousands; and under one or the other, or under both combined, all everlastingly perish but the redeemed family of God.

Evil--by which we mean sin in its more open and gross form, is, in some respects, less to be dreaded than error, that is, error on vital, fundamental points; and for the following reasons--The unmistakable voice of conscience, the universal testimony of God's children, the expressed reprobation of the world itself--all bear a loud witness against gross acts of immorality. Thus, though the carnal mind is ever lusting after evil, thorns and briars much hedge up the road toward its actual commission; and, if by the power of sin and temptation, they be unhappily broken through, the return into the narrow way, though difficult, is not wholly shut out. David, Peter, and the incestuous Corinthian fell into open evil, but they never fell into deadly error, and were not only recoverable, but, by superabounding grace, were recovered.

But error upon the grand, fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith is not only in its nature destructive, but usually destroys all who embrace it.

As, however, we wish to move cautiously upon this tender ground, let us carefully distinguish between what we may perhaps call voluntary and involuntary error. To explain our meaning more distinctly, take the two following cases of involuntary error by way of illustration. A person may be born of Socinian parents, and may have imbibed their views from the force of birth and education. Is this person irrecoverable? Certainly not. The grace of God may reach his heart, and deliver him from his errors, just as much as it may touch the conscience of a man living in all manner of iniquity, and save him from his sins. Or a child of God, one manifestly so by regenerating grace, may be tempted by the seducing spirit of error breathed into his carnal mind by a heretic or by an erroneous book, and may for a time be so stupefied by the smoke of the bottomless pit as to reel and stagger on the very brink and yet not fall in. Most of us have known something of these blasts of hell, so that we could say with Asaph, "My feet were almost gone, my steps had well near slipped;" but they have only rooted us more firmly in the truth. These are cases of what we may call involuntary error.

But there is voluntary error when a man wilfully and deliberately turns away from truth to embrace falsehood; when he is given up to strong delusions to believe a lie; when he gives heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and seeks to spread and propagate them with all his power. These cases are usually irrecoverable, for such men generally wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; error so blinds their eyes and hardens their hearts that they cannot or will not see anything but what seems to favor their views, and at last they either sink into a general state of unbelief and infidelity, or die confirmed in their deceptions. It is scarcely possible to read the Epistles of the New Testament, especially those of Paul to Timothy and Titus, and those of Peter, John, and Jude, without being struck by the strong denunciations which those inspired men of God launched, as so many burning thunderbolts, against error and erroneous men. Any approach to their strong language, even in opposing the most deadly error, would in our day be considered positively unbearable, and the grossest lack of charity. It is, with most, an unpardonable offence to draw any strong and marked lines between sinner and saint, professor and possessor, error and truth. The ancient landmarks which the word of truth has laid down have, almost by common consent, been removed, and a kind of right of common has become established, by means of which truth and error have been thrown together into one wide field, where any may roam and feed at will, and still be considered as sheep of Christ. It was not so in the days of Luther, of John Knox, and of Rutherford; but in our day there is such a general laxity of principle as regards truth and falsehood that the corruption of the world seems to have tainted the church.

There was a time in this country when, if there was roguery in the market, it was not tolerated in the counting-house; if there was blasphemy in the street, it was not allowed in the senate; if there was infidelity in the debating-room, it was not allowed in the pulpit. But now bankers and merchants cheat and lie like costermongers; Jew, Papist, and infidel sit side by side in the House of Commons; and erroneous theology and German divinity are enthroned in Independent chapels. It would almost seem that Paul, Peter, John, and Jude were needlessly harsh and severe in their denunciations of errors and erroneous men, that Luther, John Knox, and Rutherford were narrow-minded bigots, and that it matters little what a man believes if he be "a truly pious" man, a member of a church, a preacher, or a professor. Old Mrs. Bigotry is dead and buried; her funeral sermon has been preached to a crowded congregation; and this is the inscription put, by general consent, upon her tombstone:

"For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight;

He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

But if to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints be bigotry, let us be bigots still; and if it be a bad spirit to condemn error, let us bear the reproach rather than call evil good and good evil, put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Here, then, we resume our subject, hoping, with God's help and blessing, while we contend faithfully for the truth as it is in Jesus, to advance nothing that may be in the least inconsistent with his sacred word, and desiring his glory and the good of his people. But as Abraham, when he went up the mount with Isaac, left the young men and the donkey at the foot; as Moses put off his shoes, at God's command, when he stood on holy ground; so must we leave carnal reasoning at the foot of the mount where the Lord is seen, (Gen. 22:14,) and lay aside the shoes of sense and nature when we look at the bush burning with fire and not consumed.

Four things are absolutely necessary to be experimentally known and felt before we can arrive at any saving or sanctifying knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus--

1. Divine light in the understanding.
2. Spiritual faith in the heart.
3. Godly fear in the conscience.
4. Heavenly love in the affections.

Without light we cannot see; without faith we cannot believe; without godly fear we cannot reverentially adore; without love we cannot embrace him who is "the truth," as well as "the way and the life."

Here all heretics and erroneous men stumble and fall. The mysteries of our most holy faith are not to be apprehended by carnal men. Spiritual truths are for spiritual men; as the Apostle beautifully says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit--for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2:9-10.) It is, therefore, utterly impossible for men who are "sensual, having not the Spirit," to understand any branch of saving truth, much more the deep mysteries of godliness. We must be taught of God and receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, or we shall never enter therein; and it is for those who have been so led and taught that we mainly write.

Whether we set forth truth or whether we expose error--and we can scarcely do the one without at the same time performing the other--the word of God must ever be the grand armory whence we take the weapons of our spiritual warfare. This is both apostolic precept and apostolic practice. "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:17.) "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4:11.) "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." (2 Cor. 10:4.)

We have little hope of convincing those who have drunk deeply into the spirit of error. The poison is already in their veins, vitiating in them all that once seemed like truth and simplicity. As infidelity, when once it has got full possession of the mind, rejects the clearest evidences from positive inability to credit them--so error, when once it has poisoned the heart, renders it forever afterwards, in the great majority of instances, utterly incapable of receiving the truth. Against every text that may be brought forward in

support of truth an objection is started, a false interpretation offered, a counter statement made, an opposing passage quoted--the object evidently being not to bow down to truth, but to make truth bow down to error; not to submit the heart to the word of God, but to make the word of God itself bend and yield to the determined obstinacy of a mind prejudiced to its lowest depths.

O what a state of mind to be in! How careful, then, should we be, how watchful, how prayerful, lest we also, "being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from our own steadfastness." (2 Peter 3:17.) A tender conscience, a believing heart, a prayerful spirit, a watchful eye, a wary ear, a guarded tongue, and a cautious foot, will, with God's blessing, be great preservatives against error of every kind. But to see light in God's light, to feel life in his life, to have sweet fellowship and sacred communion with the Father and the Son, to walk before God in the beams of his favor, to find his word our food and drink, and to be ever approaching him through the Son of his love, pleading with him for his promised teaching--this is the true and only way to learn his truth, to believe it, to love it, and to live it.

No heretic, no erroneous man, no unbeliever ever stood on this holy ground. That childlike spirit without which there is no entering into the kingdom of heaven; that godly jealousy for the Lord's honor which makes error abhorred and truth beloved; that tender fear of his great and glorious name which leads the soul to desire his approbation and to dread his displeasure; that holy liberty which an experimental knowledge of the truth communicates to a citizen of Zion; that enlargement of heart, which draws up the affections to those things which are above, where Jesus sits at God's right hand--these, and all such similar fruits of divine teaching as specially distinguish the living saint of God, are not to be found in that bosom where error has erected its throne of darkness and death.

On the contrary, a vain--confident, self-righteous, contentious, quarrelsome spirit, breathing enmity and hatred against all who oppose their favorite dogmas, and thrust down their darling idols, are usually marks stamped upon all who are deeply imbued with heresy and error. They may be very confident in the soundness of their views, or in the firmness of their own standing, but God rejects their confidences, and they shall not prosper in them. (Jer. 2:37.)

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/truth-error/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net