



# TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

April 2018

## WILL THERE EVER BE WORLD PEACE?

Whether we are talking about peace in a family, peaceful relations at our work place, or peace between two nations, the great majority of people recognize peace as something which is desirable. The word “peace” has an appealing sound to it.

In the Old Testament, we frequently read of nations warring with one another. Secular history records that there was much fighting which took place “between the testaments,” that is, in that time frame of four hundred plus years between the close of the Old Testament and the birth of the Christ. In His instruction, Jesus also spoke of wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6). This all reminds us that our generation is not the first to observe leaders, tribes, and nations who are unable (or unwilling) to be at peace with one another.

It was a challenge to procure peace in the year 1900, when the world’s population was less than two billion people. How much more challenging it is to contemplate peace throughout the world in our day, when the population of mankind is around seven and one-half billion. Is it realistic to think that there ever could be world peace?

Some would suggest that if we can learn to overlook our differences and have a spirit of toleration, then world peace is sure to come about. Pursuing peace can be a complicated matter, but toleration of such things as infanticide, forced child labor, open prostitution, and scores of other crimes against humanity will never be acceptable to those who have a sense of human decency and a commitment to taking action which meets with the favor of the Lord God Almighty.

Some countries have attempted to become the most powerful force on the planet, thinking that by use of their might and aggression they can cause all other nations to bow down to them under their rule. If they can conquer all others, then that should provide for peace, right? How well has that approach worked in history over the long haul? It has been a course of disaster, never resulting in genuine, sustainable peace.

Some denominationalists are convinced that after Jesus comes, He will establish an earthly kingdom and usher in an unprecedented era of world peace. The

claim is that Isaiah 11 foretells the reign of the Messiah, at which time wild animals, domesticated animals, and humans all will coexist peacefully in close living arrangements. That, it is said, would be world peace.

Such a conclusion fails to see that the message of Isaiah 11 about peaceful times under the “*root of Jesse*” (11:10), a reference to Jesus being a descendant of David’s father, Jesse, points to the reign of Jesus over His *spiritual* kingdom. That is what is taking place *right now*, as He rules as “*High priest over the house of God*” (Hebrews 10:21), which is the church (1 Timothy 3:15). The Spirit guided Paul to quote the Isaiah 11 prophecy and apply it to Jesus’ current reign over Gentile converts (Romans 15:12,13).

What are some factors of our day which hinder world peace? Greed, hatred, lunacy in leadership, stubbornness, a feeling of racial superiority, a propensity for some not to get along with other people, and religious terrorism. We would suggest that, in a nutshell, the number one factor which stands in the way of world peace is mankind’s refusal to submit to Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The God of heaven has a plan for peace. And when humans embrace and adhere to that plan, there will be peace at a number of levels – peace in the home, peace in person-to-person relationships, and peace between nations. At the center of God’s peace plan is Jesus the Christ, Who is “*the Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6). His teaching is “*the gospel of peace*” (Ephesians 6:15). His kingdom is a kingdom of peace (Romans 14:17), being composed of disciples who strive to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).

If the goal is to get the Middle-Eastern nation of Israel and its Arab neighbors, or Iran and Iraq, to have true peace, the answer is not to send a delegation from the United Nations. The solution is found and obtainable only in Jesus. When men and women humble themselves and submit to the Prince of Peace by obeying His gospel, they become part of God’s peaceful family, tearing down walls of division (Galatians 3:26-29). World peace is attainable only via God’s Son. Any other approach is futile fantasy.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## “THE FEAR OF THE LORD” IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Seven verses into the opening chapter of this great book of wisdom, we find the expression “*the fear of the LORD*.” Those words occur frequently throughout the book of Proverbs. What did Solomon write about “*the fear of the LORD*?”

“The fear of the LORD” is not the fear that a child has of an abusive parent (God could never be abusive). It is not the fear of calamity or death. Neither is it the fear of losing privileges or being displeasing to humans in some fashion. When one “fears” God, he reverences Him, standing in awe of the Almighty. One who genuinely fears the Lord will have a desire and willingness to submit to what He says to do.

Let us look at those verses in the book of Proverbs in which we read about “*the fear the LORD*.”

- Proverbs 1:7 – “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*” The word “beginning” is from a Hebrew word which means “principal thing” [Strong via e-Sword].

- Proverbs 1:29,30 – “*Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke.*” Fearing God is a matter of choice. It is not something with which one is born. A person must be educated properly, then choose to fear Him.

- Proverbs 2:5 – “*Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.*” It is possible to understand the fear of the Lord.

- Proverbs 3:7 – “*Do not be wise in the your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.*” Genuine fear of the Lord causes a person to depart from evil. Yes, it is possible for people to give up sinful practices with other motives, but fearing Jehovah will cause one to want to cease sin for the right reason, which is to please the God of heaven.

- Proverbs 8:13 – “*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.*” God hates all forms of evil, and so should we.

- Proverbs 9:10 – “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*” Fearing Jehovah is the wise thing to do!

- Proverbs 10:27 – “*The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.*” Fearing the Lord brings blessings while we live on the earth. All things considered, and all things being equal, one who fears the Lord God and takes care of his body will have a better quality of life and will live longer than the fellow who does not do such things.

- Proverbs 14:26 – “*In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.*” One who has a healthy respect for God will be committed to Him, having confidence in His character, promises, and the help He provides.

- Proverbs 14:27 – “*The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.*”

- Proverbs 15:16 – “*Better is little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure with trouble.*” Fearing the Lord is of greater value than massive material treasures.

- Proverbs 16:6 – “*In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity, and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.*” Again, fear of God is one proper motive for serving Him and trying to please Him.

- Proverbs 19:23 – “*The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil.*” Having a sense of being satisfied as one fears and serves the Lord reminds us of Paul’s statements about his contentment in the Lord’s service (Philippians 4:11-13).

- Proverbs 22:4 – “*By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life.*” Spiritual matters are of more significance than material ones. The most important things for each one of us to pursue are *spiritual* riches, *spiritual* honor, and *spiritual* life (Ephesians 1:3). At the same time, when it comes to earthly/material riches, earthly honor, and earthly life, the remainder of the book of Proverbs shows us that diligent work is rewarded in this life.

- Proverbs 23:17 – “*Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day.*” Fearing the Lord ought to be a continuous, ongoing state of mind.

- Proverbs 24:21 – “*My son, fear the LORD and the king; do not associate with those given to change.*” The New Testament has a similar thought about our approach to God and civil authorities, as it is written, “. . . *Fear God. Honor the king*” (1 Peter 2:17).

Throughout the book of Proverbs, fearing the Lord is held up as the right thing to do, showing that there is a connection between the fear of the Lord and wisdom (9:10), atonement (16:6), walking uprightly (14:2), having a place of refuge in God (14:26), and a fountain of life (14:27).

May each one of us strive to maintain a pure heart in which we honor and reverence the Lord Almighty. In gratitude for all that He has done and continues to do for us, let us also love Him with all of our being.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## THANK GOD FOR OPEN DOORS!

There is such a thing in life as taking a literal hand to open a material door made of wood or metal. There also are open doors in our service to the Lord. In the New Testament, we read about God opening doors for His servants. In Bible lingo, what is an “open” door? It refers to *an opportunity* presented.

After Barnabas and Paul completed a lengthy preaching trip together, they returned to the saints in Antioch. “*Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles*” (Acts 14:27). The door “opened” to them was the opportunity to preach the gospel to lost people among the Gentiles.

During the course of one of Paul’s later preaching journeys, he wrote to the church in Corinth, informing the brethren, “*But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries*” (1 Corinthians 16:8,9). When that open door came his way, Paul was prepared to stay longer in that location. In another letter to the same congregation, he wrote, “*Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 2:12). In this latter case, he did not remain long because he was pressing on toward a meeting with Titus in order to receive updated information about his beloved brothers and sisters in Corinth (2:13).

As we think about open doors, Jesus’ message to His followers in ancient Philadelphia comes to mind. Our Lord described Himself as “*He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens*” (Philadelphia 3:7). When it comes to open doors, what should we do with them?

- **Ask** for open doors. When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he instructed the Christians in Colosse, “*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving, meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains*” (Colossians 4:2,3; emphasis mine, rdc). Yes, yes, let us pray that there might be opportunities given to God’s faithful to teach the good news of His salvation! Let us pray for those chances in our communities, in our personal lives, and around the world. Let us lift our voices to the Opener of doors to provide opportunities to teach the pure word of God in North Korea, Saudi Arabia, China, and all other places where religious freedom currently is suppressed.

- **Pursue/seek** open doors. Like the Jews of Nehemiah’s day, we need to pray, and after the words

of our prayers come to an end, we must go to work! (Nehemiah 4:9). Prayer plus work/effort is a great approach! There may be times when we feel like good things are “dropped into our laps.” It is possible for lost people to approach us and ask us to teach them the Bible, but such instances are rare. Rather than just sitting around and waiting, we need to take the initiative and look for occasions to teach the Bible. When the Lord opened that door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27), where were Paul and Barnabas? Not lounging inside their tent: they were out working among the people. At times, we do not have because we do not ask and do not seek (James 4:2).

- **Take advantage of** open doors. We think of Barnabas and Saul being given the chance to speak to Jews in Antioch of Pisidia. When the rulers of the synagogue told them if they had anything to say, they could address the assembly. Paul immediately seized the moment to declare God’s great message to those who were gathered (Acts 13:13-17). If someone shows interest in the truth and we do not jump on the chance to teach them, they just may turn to a person or group who will teach them a false message. Or, they may lose interest completely. Over thirty years ago, we sought for and were given the opportunity to begin teaching a weekly Bible class in a maximum security prison in Taiwan. A week after we began those studies, a denominational group appealed to the prison officials to allow them to have some kind of religious activity inside. They were told that the activities schedule was full, so they were turned down. What if we had dragged our feet for a couple of weeks instead of seizing the chance?! We are thrilled that the weekly study we began in the 1980’s continues even now.

- **Evaluate** open doors. Sometimes there may be factors which cause us to say “No” or to delay our decision to go through such doors. Paul had an open door in Troas, but he was greatly concerned about the church in Corinth, so he did not take full advantage of one opportunity in order to be busy in some other aspect of God’s Cause (2 Corinthians 2:12,13). A radio station may contact a local church and inform it that there is a radio time slot available at 3:00 in the morning. That might be an open door, but most likely many congregations would “pass” on the offer.

- **Thank God for** open doors. We praise Him for His providence and are grateful for doors He opened in the past and continues to open for His people. Let us all be looking for opportunities . . . to sow the seed . . . to build up a brother or sister who is struggling . . . to do kind deeds in the Lord’s name . . .

-- Roger D. Campbell

## James 3:1 – “LET NOT MANY OF YOU BECOME TEACHERS”

What an intriguing statement. Why do you suppose God would tell His children such a thing? In order to reach more people, it seems like the church would be better off with *more* teachers, not less.

What is the context of this instruction in James 3:1? In the *previous* section of his letter, James showed the need for Christians to demonstrate their faith by their works because faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26). That certainly holds true for those who serve as teachers — they need to be people who put their faith into action. About what did James write immediately *following* this statement in James 3:1 about not many becoming teachers? He spoke of the need for saints to control their tongue (James 3:1-12). Again, that truth definitely would apply to anyone who serves as a teacher.

The teachers under consideration in James 3:1 are not those who teach secular subjects, but rather those who teach the word of God. Teachers play a great role in God’s church. They are sincerely interested in helping people get ready to go to heaven. Some of them teach people what the Bible says about salvation from sin. Other teachers communicate instructions from the Bible to Christians, offering encouragement and providing edification.

There is something which we have not yet done, and that is give the entire message of James 3:1, which is, “*My brethren, let not many of your become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*” The Lord calls for more workers (Matthew 9:37,38), and teaching is part of the work needed, but He also warns that those who teach will receive a stricter judgment. What is that all about?

Consider something which the Master said during His public ministry. He spoke of two servants who did not please their master. The one who more fully knew his master’s will was held more accountable, and he would be punished more severely than the other fellow (Luke 12:45-47). Hear Jesus’ own explanation: “*For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required, and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more*” (Luke 12:48). Apply that to those who act as teachers of God’s word: with their opportunity to teach and the privilege of teaching come a greater responsibility and accountability. As James wrote, they will be held up to a stricter judgment. It is not that God desires to keep the number of Bible teachers as low as possible, but rather He wants those who take on the task of teaching to do so with a sense of seriousness and responsibility to themselves, to their students, and to the Lord. God holds them accountable for what they

teach and how they teach it.

In the first century, some members of the church were designated as teachers and some were not. Paul once asked a series of rhetorical questions, beginning with these: “*Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?*” (1 Corinthians 12:28). It is plain that, no, not all saints of God were teachers at that time. In a different letter to Christians, the same apostle declared this about Jesus: “*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers*” (Ephesians 4:11). It is clear that there were “some” who played the roles mentioned. Just like not all were apostles or prophets, not all were teachers.

Acts 13 begins with the words, “*Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers . . .*” (Acts 13:1). Two of those named were Barnabas and Saul. When we put this information together with what we have seen in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11, we conclude that the prohibition of many becoming teachers (James 3:1) refers to those who fit into the class of public teachers or those designated as “our teachers.”

How does all of this harmonize with what we read in Hebrews 5:12? There it is written, “*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.*” That instruction was given as part of an appeal for all saints to mature spiritually. The thought is that those who are spiritually mature are able to teach God’s word. The Bible declares that a servant of the Lord is supposed to be “*able to teach*” (2 Timothy 2:24). We recall that after intense persecution of the disciples broke out in Jerusalem, the brethren who left Jerusalem and were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4). No one is at liberty to dilute or delete what the Lord says to Christians: “*You ought to be teachers*” (Hebrews 5:12).

While it is God’s will for all members of the church to participate in evangelism, which means communicating the gospel to lost people (Mark 16:15,16), not everyone will be part of the church’s team of public proclaimers of His word. Those who do serve as public teachers need to take James 3:1 to heart. “Stricter judgment” is a serious matter.

-- Roger D. Campbell

[Unless stated otherwise, all quotes in all articles of TRUTH come from the New King James Version; ©1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.]

**TRUTH** is published monthly by the Green’s Lake Road church of Christ in order to help educate, edify, encourage, and equip the saints of God.